

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1895.

WHEN LEAVES WERE GREEN

BY SYDNEY HODGES.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GLYN'S WANDERINGS.

WHEN Glyn left the widow's house he started off at a quick pace through the streets without the least idea whither he was going. The necessity for rapid motion was his one thought. Some of us at least have known that state of extreme perturbation of spirit when action is the only relief; when stillness and inactivity almost make the brain reel, and you feel that you must go on, on, if you would keep reason on her throne. It is a state of mind, happily, that does not come often—perhaps not more than once or twice in a lifetime; but it is not a pleasant thing to look back upon even after long years.

So Glyn went on mile after mile with rapid strides; heedless of the passers-by; heedless of where he was going. Everything but the one burning thought was completely driven from his mind, and that seemed to rend his brain. D'Eyncourt of all people! The man he thought she despised. A man utterly false and shallow, he knew. What was he about with that girl, Sib Maitland? There was some mystery attached to that, which must be cleared up before this could be allowed to go on. He would bring him to book himself, and charge him with falsehood and treachery to his very face.

This was all very well, we know, but how was he to do it? He had not yet arrived at this stage in his reflections. He had not considered what right he had to interfere, or indeed how he could do so, considering they were in Italy and he in England. A letter certainly might do it; but then on the face of it, it would have been more than an absurdity for him to have upset any family arrangement of this kind; one moreover, which was sanctioned by Blanche's father, and was only the renewal of a former engagement. But, as

before said, Glyn had not yet reached this stage. That was to come after. At present indignation strong and fierce had gripped him hard, and had he been able at that moment to confront D'Eyncourt or even Blanche, probably emotion might have got the better of discretion. It is a good thing that circumstances do not always give us the chance of yielding to our first impulses.

Glyn walked many a mile that morning. He had instinctively, as it were, set out on his usual route towards Hampstead, but a new and racking thought came into his head when he had got half-way there. He remembered his last walk in that direction, and how he had set down on the Heath facing the south, and let his thoughts wander away to the sunny clime where Blanche was still sojourning, and how the thought of her had soothed his spirit as he gazed into the dim distance.

Now the thought was madness—the spot would be hateful to him. He turned suddenly and walked back again into the town, mingling with the crowds of men each intent upon his own joy or sorrow, and taking no heed of the stalwart young man, walking at a great pace, who seemed to think that all was over for him in this life. That the sun could never shine for him again, that nature could never again spread out her glorious book before him and say, "Behold, here is joy untold! Come to me, and I will give you endless peace and happiness—endless beauty, infinite variety."

Suddenly Glyn paused in his walk. A thought flashed across his mind like a gleam of light. He went on again at greater speed than before towards the widow's house.

"What if she is mistaken, or has read the letter wrongly? What a fool I am not to read it myself."

This was his new hope, his new reflection. In a very few minutes he reached the house, and rapped violently—so violently that Annette, who had not long completed her guilty task, leaped almost out of her skirts at the thought that it might be her mistress.

Briggs appeared, and Glynn was passing in as usual. Briggs stopped him with a word.

"Mrs. Byng is not at home, sir."

"Not at home—oh! Will she be long?"

"I think she will, sir. I heard her tell the coachman to drive to Victoria Station."

Glyn paused a moment. "Oh, no matter," he said. "I only want to get something from the drawing-room."

He had a vague hope—a foolish one, of course—that the letter might have been left on Mrs. Byng's favourite writing-table. He was on sufficiently intimate terms, at any rate, to look. He was up the stairs in three bounds. He found the writing-table in a painfully neat condition, thanks to Annette's tender care. He even glanced at the waste-paper basket, but thanks to Annette again, there was not a vestige of the letter to be seen. If we could only convey speech to

inanimate things, what wonderful secrets would come to light. What a tale that waste-paper basket could have told to Glyn that morning!

He retraced his steps downstairs, and went into the dining-room. Not a vestige of the letter there. Indeed he had seen Mrs. Byng take it with her when she left the room. A new thought struck him. Sib Maitland had probably seen it. She would remember the contents. He would try and see her. And yet, would it not seem strange to exhibit to her such an extreme anxiety about this letter? He did not care for that. Something must be done to allay this racking heart-ache. He rang the bell. Briggs appeared.

"Is Miss Maitland still in her room?"

"Yes, sir, I believe so."

"Could I send a message to her?"

"I'll see, sir."

Briggs left the room and held a consultation with Annette. Then he returned.

"Miss Maitland is not at all well, sir, and particularly requested that she might not be disturbed."

"Oh, very well."

Glyn felt that he was destined to be defeated. Besides, after all it was very improbable that there could have been any mistake about a letter which had had such a disastrous effect on Sib. He did not like to relinquish the new-formed hope, slight as it was. At the same time he saw the folly of indulging in it. What was he to do? Where go? He could not return home to sit hour after hour in a sick house indulging in his miserable thoughts. He could not wander unceasingly about the streets.

"Good heavens! What a wretched piece of business is this life!" he cried. "Why on earth are we born if we are to be tossed about and racked like this?"

Suddenly a new thought came to him. He would go to Folkestone himself and try and arrange this new business of getting lodgings for his mother. It would at least expedite matters for her, and he would thus find some distraction to his thoughts, and be doing some good. His grief made him reckless of expense. Troubles are always comparative. His anxiety about money had been entirely absorbed in the grief about Blanche.

He sent a hasty line to his sister to explain why he did not return, and started for the station. Luckily he found an express train about to start, and was soon on his way.

There is nothing like a quick journey by rail as a corrective to perturbation of spirit. The rapid motion, the ever-changing aspects of nature, the fresh air blowing in through the open window, the bustle of the stations, the coming and going of fellow-passengers all tend to divert the mind from one's immediate woes, and, no matter how keen the anguish may be, one is bound to throw it off to some extent.

By the time Glyn had reached Folkestone, the feverish agitation

which had beset him in town was almost gone. Calm resolve had taken the place of vain jobations against his fate. His luck was still against him, however, for he found that the friend he hoped to see was away. He set to work, nevertheless, and soon had his pocket filled with cards of lodging-houses, upon which he made notes with regard to terms, so that he might consult his sister on his return. Then he took a turn over the Lees, and followed the path as far as Sandgate, and saw the evening light dying away in golden glory over the low promontory of Dungeness; and this caused his thoughts to travel still further west, until he very nearly became a wreck again over the memories of Cornwall and that never-to-be-forgotten trip to the Land's End, with all its glories of sea and rock and feathery foam.

So he retraced his steps quickly, and going to the most suitable lodging-house he had seen, told the people he would telegraph to them finally in the morning, and then he wended his way back to the station, and took the first train to town.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BLACK-FLOWING RIVER.

MRS. COURTENAY BYNG arranged matters quite comfortably at Brighton. Her old servant's rooms were happily vacant, and she would be only too pleased to accommodate any friends of her former mistress. Then, quite confidentially, Mrs. Byng arranged with her to charge a much lower sum for the rooms than she usually received, she herself undertaking to make up the difference.

Congratulating herself on this diplomatic move, Mrs. Byng returned to town entertaining, like the immortal Scrooge, an improved opinion of herself. It was late in the afternoon when she reached Victoria; but she secured a hansom, and drove at once to Mrs. Beverley's.

On hearing that Mrs. Byng had returned, Kate came down bearing a somewhat better report of her mother.

The widow explained what she had done, and, if she had looked for no other reward, the expression of relief in Kate's face would have been quite a sufficient one.

"It is really too kind of you," said Kate. "I am sure it will be the greatest possible relief to poor Glyn, for he has been terribly worried lately."

"I know it," answered the widow. "I am only too glad to help him. Besides, I have a selfish motive in view. If he is so worried, my portrait will suffer. To work well, an artist should have a calm mind."

"I am afraid very few have," answered Kate; "but of course it is very desirable."

"Well, then, you will tell your brother that it is all arranged, and I shall hope to see him in the morning."

"Yes, certainly. I really don't know how to thank you. But do let me get you some tea! You must be tired after your journey."

"No, thanks. I must not stay a moment longer. I have left Sib alone all day, and she was by no means well this morning. She will wonder what has become of me."

She said good-bye, and hastened away; but a surprise awaited her on reaching Bruton Street. In answer to her inquiry as to how Miss Maitland was, Briggs informed her that she was gone out.

"Gone out!" exclaimed Mrs. Byng, "and at this hour! Why, she was quite ill when I left. Did she say where she was going?"

"No, ma'am; but she has left this note for you," said Briggs, handing her a small missive.

Mrs. Byng opened it, and glanced over the contents. Then she pursued her way to her boudoir, and ordered some tea. Then, taking her seat by the fire, she read the note again. It was as follows:—

"MY DEAREST LAURA,—I have been alone all day, and have been feeling dreadfully ill and depressed. Your return seems so uncertain, that I have decided to go and see Kate Beverley. Do not worry about me. I may stay some time, but I will get Mr. Beverley to see me home.

"Ever yours affectionately,
"SIB."

A pang of reproach shot through the widow's heart.

"Poor child!" she said. "It is hard to make her suffer as well; but I must go through with it now I have gone so far."

Her first impulse was to follow Sib, and bring her back herself; but then she reflected that, if Glyn brought her back, she would have him, probably, for the rest of the evening; so she thought she would let matters take their course. She therefore settled herself by the fire, and fell to musing.

The hours passed. Dinner was announced, but Sib had not returned. Mrs. Byng did not consider there was any cause for anxiety. In fact, the thought never crossed her mind. She ate her dinner in solitude, her appetite sharpened by the sea air and the thought of her successful move. After dinner she went to the drawing-room, and, throwing herself on a couch, dropped off into a sound sleep.

When she awoke, the fire was burning low. She generally rang for tea, so the servant had not disturbed her. She glanced at the clock; to her great surprise the hand pointed to ten.

She rang the bell, and Briggs appeared.

"Has Miss Maitland returned?" she asked.

"No, ma'am."

"What can be keeping her so late, I wonder," said the widow.

She told Briggs to bring some tea. Having taken a cup, she sat on by the fire, feeling somewhat anxious. Half-an-hour passed; her

anxiety increased, still there was no Sib. When eleven o'clock struck, she could bear it no longer. She rang again, and told Briggs to summon a four-wheeled cab. Then she sent Annette for a cloak and shawl, and, wrapping herself well up, started on her way to Mrs. Beverley's lodgings.

It was half-past eight when Glyn reached Charing Cross. He hurried out of the station, as he was anxious to reach home and see how his mother was getting on.

He was just passing the gates of the station-yard when the slight form of a woman hurried past him, wrapped in a close-fitting ulster. Something in the figure, and in the glimpse of the profile which he caught, attracted his attention.

"It is awfully like her," he said, "and yet it cannot be at this hour."

The woman turned down Villiers Street at a quick pace. Glyn was determined to satisfy himself. He ran quickly through the station and down the steps leading to the Metropolitan Railway.

As he neared the bottom of the flight, the woman who had excited his curiosity approached. He drew back a little, but he saw her plainly, for the moonlight was bright upon her face. His suspicions were confirmed; it was Sib Maitland.

She did not see him, for she was looking straight before her. In the utmost wonder he followed her.

She turned a little to the left to avoid the Metropolitan Station, and then went straight through the archway on to the Embankment.

It was comparatively deserted at this hour. She advanced to the parapet, and stood gazing on to the river. Glyn kept in the shadow of the station, and watched her closely, with a vague sensation of distrust. She stood gazing a long time. The moon was shimmering on the dark water, which was rushing downward with a strong tide. The rapid eddies were traced in silver lines of moonlight, and the waters faded into a thin white mist which almost hid the opposite shore, with its tall shot-tower and lines of wharves. The railway-bridge rose up dark and ominous to the right, with deep, mysterious shadows between its piles, and a sound of rushing water where the huge pillars intercepted the strong tide.

Suddenly Sib turned away from the water, and started off at a quick pace across the road. Then she pursued her way eastward.

"What on earth does it mean?" thought Glyn, as he followed at a safe distance. He did not like to obtrude himself upon her, under the circumstances; at the same time he felt that he ought not to leave her alone at such an hour. Suddenly she crossed the road again towards the river, and once more stood gazing into the dark rushing waters. She seemed quite unconscious of Glyn's presence. She never once looked round, though there was little more than the width of the road between them.

After a brief interval she turned westward again, walking rapidly towards the railway bridge. Glyn crossed, and followed on the other side, proceeding almost abreast of her. One or two vehicles passed along the road, and a few foot-passengers, so that the sound of his steps was lost. When she arrived at the wooden way which leads down to the steamboats just opposite the Metropolitan Station, she stopped again. Glyn slipped into the shadow of the archway, still unobserved.

"How long is this to go on," he thought. "Poor little soul! She is restless and unhappy like myself, but I must speak to her if she stays much longer. I don't like the look of things."

Suddenly there was another movement. Sib Maitland made a step or two forward, and disappeared into the narrow footway leading to the river. Seriously alarmed, Glyn sprang forward and followed her.

As he reached the footway, he saw Sib speeding rapidly down it near the bottom. To his surprise he found that the iron gates at the top were shut. She must have passed these in some way. At a second glance he saw how. There was a narrow space between the supports of the gate and the masonry at the sides, which could be passed through by stepping up on to the iron-work. She must have gone that way. In an instant Glyn had passed the barrier, and was speeding down after her.

He was too late. As he turned the corner at the bottom on to the landing-stage, he saw the flutter of a dress on the further side; and the next moment he heard a splash.

Sib Maitland was battling with the dark water, whose cruel eddies closed over her and dragged her down.

Glyn was a strong swimmer, but he had never before been confronted with such an emergency as this. Instinctively he threw off his coat and shoes, and the next instant he was in the water, striking out bravely towards the scrap of still floating drapery which lay white in the moonlight.

Before he could reach it it had disappeared.

He looked eagerly about him. He felt almost supernaturally calm, as all really brave natures do in emergencies. He knew the girl's life depended on the keenest observation and instant action. He felt, moreover, that she would come to the surface again. The eddies would raise her sooner or later.

Meanwhile he was drifting rapidly downwards with the tide.

He did not utter a cry. He took in the whole situation at a glance. There was no possible help for her except from him. She would be drowned before any one else could come to her aid. It was useless, therefore, to expend his breath in cries. He knew if the worst came to the worst that he could save himself by swimming to the Adelphi steps.

Something struck lightly against his legs. He made a sudden dive, and clutched a piece of drapery. It was the neckerchief round

Sib's throat, which was luckily tied securely in a bow in front. In another moment he had her head above water.

But how was he to keep it there and still steer for the steps. She was already unconscious, but Glyn knew this was the best thing that could have happened, as she would not struggle. He remembered reading in the instructions for saving people from drowning that the best plan is to get your hand under the arm-pit. Glyn did so, but still it was hard work bearing her up and swimming with one hand. His heart almost failed him.

Suddenly a strong eddy swept him in towards the wall. Oh, if there were but a chain or a projection even! But there was nothing. Nothing but the slimy green stones, that were less to be depended on than the water. He struck out again, almost going under with his burden more than once, as the strong current swept them onward. They were out in the stream again, rapidly nearing the projection of the steps. Good God! would he miss them after all?

Now was the time for help. He raised one loud shrill cry. The next moment he was conscious of a shout in response, and saw a figure running down the steps.

The outermost angle of the masonry was within a yard or two, but the strong tide was hurrying him past. He gave one or two frantic strokes; he stretched out his hand. His fingers reached to within six inches of the stone work, still he was hurrying past. The lifting of his hand sent him under. He felt that the struggle was useless—a deadly despair seized him. He must relinquish his burden or drown.

At that instant a hand clutched his own, and he was drawn rapidly backwards. The sudden change almost made him lose his hold of the girl, but he gripped her arm firmly. In another moment both were dragged on to the steps, with two policemen bending over them.

"That's a narrow shave, mister. What does all this mean?" said one, as he dragged Glyn high and dry, while his comrade handled Sibyl.

But Glyn was too exhausted to answer. He lay on the steps breathing heavily.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SIB ASKS A QUESTION.

"How did it happen, Glyn?" said Kate Beverley, as the brother and sister sat by a good fire an hour or two later. "It must have been a terribly narrow escape."

"An awfully near shave, I assure you. Those instructions to swimmers are all very well in theory, but when you have to put them into practice, especially in a strong tideway, it is quite another matter. I thought it was all up with both of us once or twice."

"And you say it was through some disappointment?"

"Yes. It's useless concealing facts, and I know you will not betray her secret. The fact is there's some horrid news come; horrid for both of us. Blanche is going to marry that fellow D'Eyncourt. Sib Maitland was in love with him."

"Going to marry him? Oh, Glyn, this cannot be true!"

It was for her brother that her cry went out, for she knew what a death-blow this was to his hopes.

"I wish to heaven I could think so. Mrs. Byng told me so herself, and besides, that poor girl would never have committed such a rash act if she had not been sure of it. It is horrible. Every hope in life is gone."

He threw his head back with a look of dull despair. His sister knew that words of consolation at such a time would be vain. She softly took his hand without speaking.

"Ah!" exclaimed Glyn, with a long-drawn sigh, "it is useless giving way. I have enough on my hands without this, God knows! I suppose others have had to endure the same thing; but there does appear to be a fearful combination of bad luck against me at present. How is the mother now?"

"She was calmer when I left her just now. I can relieve your mind about her. Mrs. Byng has been so kind. She has been to Brighton and arranged all about lodgings, and says it will cost us very little indeed, as it is an old servant of hers who has the rooms to let."

"That is awfully good of her. I must go to her at once, late as it is. She will be in a great state of mind about Miss Maitland. Just step up and see how she is now. I should like to be able to take a good report of her."

Kate left the room, and Glyn sat down again before the fire. Strong as he was, the physical exhaustion he had undergone had weakened him considerably, and in spite of dry clothing and stimulants he was feeling the effects. He had judged it better to take Sib to his own place. The landlady was a kind, motherly woman, and his sister was also there to help and advise. Besides, he hoped a scandal would be avoided. Nothing need be said about Sib Maitland's affairs in his own rooms; but if he had taken her to Bruton Street the servants would have gossiped for a month.

As to the young lady who had caused all this commotion, she was snug in bed in a deep sleep. The guardians of the peace, who had dragged Glyn and his burthen from the water, had wrapped them both in their own over-coats, and, at Glyn's entreaty, had driven direct to Gower Street. So that, with the exception of a short-lived wonderment among the small crowd which even at that hour had of course collected, the affair, tragical as it might have been, terminated quietly. Glyn, indeed, had managed to make the policemen believe that the whole affair was an accident. That the young lady had overbalanced

herself, and had fallen into the water ; and of course he and Sib were put down as a pair of lovers taking a moonlight stroll. On their arrival in Gower Street the doctor had been hastily summoned, and had adopted certain remedies which proved efficacious. He did not apprehend any very serious results. Warmth and rest were the chief things at present. The sleep into which Sib had fallen was the very best thing for her.

At first Glyn had intended not to say a word about the night's adventures even to Mrs. Byng ; but as Sib would have to return there he thought it best to tell her all that had occurred in strict confidence. He must, moreover, caution the widow about leaving her alone in her present state of mind. The affair had done Glyn good. He laid the lesson to heart. He, at least, had not reached such a depth of despair as this poor girl had. There must be something more in her connection with D'Eyncourt than he had before surmised, to have driven her to such an extremity.

In the midst of his musings he was startled by a double knock at the door. The next moment he heard Mrs. Byng's voice in the hall. He rose to meet her as she entered the room.

"Oh, Mr. Beverley, I am sure something has happened ! What on earth is keeping Sib here at this hour ? How pale you look. What does it all mean ? She left a note to say you would bring her home."

Glyn gave her a chair, and then told her as briefly as possible what had taken place. The widow turned deadly pale, and to Glyn's surprise remained speechless.

"Are you not dreadfully shocked ?" he asked. "I suppose it was the news of this morning which caused it. She must, indeed, have been fond of him to be driven to such an act."

"It is very, very dreadful," the widow answered. She kept her eyes fixed on the fire with a strangely troubled look in her face, such as Glyn had never seen there before. It was almost the look of a criminal. She went on hastily—

"But then Sib is always impulsive. These usually quiet creatures do the strangest things under the influence of excitement. What a merciful thing it was that you were there."

The widow shuddered, as if struck with sudden cold. Then she drew closer to the fire.

"You, too. It was a narrow escape for both. You are not feeling any ill effects, I hope," she added, looking up suddenly.

"No, nothing particular," Glyn said. He had made light of the struggle he had gone through in saving Sib. He had led the widow to suppose it was merely a plunge in and out again. It was Sib's act which upset her so much.

"Do you know," she went on, "I think it will be much better for me not to know anything about this affair. I am sure she would not wish me to know it. It would be much less awkward. Might it not be supposed she was taken ill while paying you a visit ?"

"I dare say it might. I will speak to Kate about it."

"It is so sad, too, just now, when you have so much trouble on your hands. I can relieve your mind on one subject, however. I have found a place for your mother to go where she will be well looked after, and at a very slight cost."

"So Kate tells me. It is really very kind of you to take so much trouble. I don't know how to thank you sufficiently."

"It is a great pleasure to me to help you. You know I would do very much more for you than that."

The widow's voice was a little tremulous as she said these words; but Glyn had gone off into a reverie again, and their significance was lost on him.

"Now, I am going to make a request," said the widow. "I am sure you and your sister have both had worry and bother enough for to-night. You must let me sit up with your mother. I can send back the cab to tell them not to expect me home."

"Some one must remain with Miss Maitland, I fancy," Glyn answered. "I thought of sitting up with my mother, and Kate can remain with her."

"Indeed you will do nothing of the kind. You must really let me stay."

Kate entered the room at this moment. The widow repeated her offer.

"It is very kind of you, but there is no necessity," Kate said. "I must sit up, for I promised Miss Maitland I would not leave her. Poor little soul, she is sorely distressed. I can go into my mother occasionally, and get her all that is necessary. Besides, they are both sleeping soundly now. Our landlady has also offered to help, if necessary. Every one is so very kind."

It was clearly useless for the widow to stay, and she saw it. She left somewhat reluctantly, promising to come early in the morning.

"You need say nothing to Sib of my having been here to-night. Her illness may be supposed to be quite accidental. I cannot tell you how thankful I am that you happened to see her, Mr. Beverley. I shall be eternally grateful."

In the middle of the night Sib Maitland woke up suddenly, and fixed her eyes on Kate, who was sitting in deep thought by her bedside. Kate did not perceive that she was awake until she spoke. Her voice came very faintly to her ear.

"Miss Beverley."

"Yes, dear," answered Kate, bending over her.

"Do you know why I did that dreadful thing last night?"

"I think I do, dear."

Sib looked at her with eyes of wonder.

"Why, who could have told you?" she asked.

"My brother suspected it long ago, and he connected it with the letter which came yesterday."

"Did he, really? How strange that he should have noticed it. I thought no one in the world suspected."

There was a pause of some minutes. Kate thought she was dropping off to sleep again, for her eyes were closed. The loud rattle of a cab sounded in the street below; before its echoes had died away, Sib spoke again.

"Will you take my hand? I like to feel that you are near me, and—may I call you Kate?"

"Certainly, dear, if you like."

"Listen, Kate. Bend down your ear. It was very good and brave of your brother to save me; but I wish he had not done so. I cannot live without *him*. Oh, I cannot, I cannot."

She broke into a low wail. Kate knelt by the bedside, and put her arms about the frail form, and strove to whisper words of comfort.

"You do not know how I loved him," Sib went on. "I never had a thought for any one else. I always told him I should die if he were false to me, and I have suffered so cruelly in these last two years. Oh, how terrible it is for a man to say that he loves you unless he is quite sure of his own heart."

"But you will get over this, now that you know the truth," said Kate. "It is most unlikely that you should continue to waste your heart on one who treated you so badly. He is not worthy of you."

"I don't like to hear him spoken against, even now. Perhaps you do not know what it is to love as I have loved. Do you?" she added, looking up suddenly.

Kate bent down her head to hide the pang which shot through her heart, and brought a sudden crimson flush to her cheek.

"Do you know what it is," Sib went on, "to have no thought apart from the one you love? For it to be the first thought that strikes you when you open your eyes in the morning, and the last to mingle with your prayers at night? Never to have the least sense of happiness apart from him? Always to think of him when you look at a beautiful cloud or a flower, or at the wide blue sea? To go about with a dull sense of pain ever at the heart when he is absent, and even when he is present; to feel for him a love so intense that it becomes almost pain? Oh, why are we created with feelings so acute that it seems impossible to be ever really happy except in some very, very brief moments?"

"Hush, hush, dear!" Kate answered. "Your love has not been a happy one, perhaps, at any time. If you had perfect confidence in the man you loved, you would not have felt this pain. It would have been a heaven of happiness to you. You have mistrusted him, unknown to yourself."

"Perhaps I did—perhaps I did. I see it all now. If God would

only deliver me from this endless pain, how thankful I should be. I am so very, very weary of life."

"You are weak and ill now. When you are better, you will see things differently. You will grow more hopeful. At your age hope must come, and happiness by-and-by."

"I do not think so: but how tired you must be. How good you are to me. Will you come and lie down beside me? Perhaps I should go to sleep again. It is the only respite from pain now."

"I will come almost immediately," Kate answered, as she rose from the bedside. She hurried to her mother's room. To her great relief, the old lady slept soundly. Then she returned to Sib, and was glad to lie down and put her arms around her.

So, as the early morning light came stealing into the room, the two lay side by side, wrapped in that oblivion which is God's blessed antidote for all earthly pain.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A FATAL STEP.

ANOTHER week had passed. Glyn's labours at the widow's were coming to a close, but no improvement had taken place in his mental condition. Indeed, his anxieties had reached such a pitch that it was not to be expected. He had got his mother and sister away to the lodgings at Brighton which Mrs. Byng had secured for them, but the expenses of the move had reduced his small stock of money to the lowest possible ebb. In fact he had scarcely enough left to pay his daily expenses for more than a week or two.

It is true there was the money to come for Mrs. Byng's portrait; but he could not expect that until the picture was finished, and that could not be done in a hurry, for the simple reason that the widow threw every possible obstacle in the way of its accomplishment. He had already been double the time over it that he would have been under ordinary circumstances. One morning it was a headache which prevented the widow from sitting, and Glyn must amuse her while she reclined on her favourite couch, deluging herself with eau de Cologne. Another morning a walk in the park was a necessity. It was so nice in the morning, when there were not many people about, and they could sit under the trees and talk uninterruptedly. Picture-galleries, too, which in these days spring up wherever there is a chance of catching stray shillings, claimed a considerable amount of time, and as it was, of course, a good thing for Glyn to see what other artists were about, he was always the escort on these occasions.

All this would have been very pleasant if Glyn had not been so oppressed with anxieties, monetary and otherwise. As it was, his only desire was to get on with his work, and he naturally chafed under

these perpetual delays. His nature revolted from the thought of letting the widow know to what an extremely low ebb his finances had dropped; and, besides, there really were many occasions when he felt so depressed, that he could not have done justice to his work. To insure success an artist, more than any one, requires a clear mind and a steady hand. Even with these, success is difficult of attainment; without them, it is next to impossible. To endeavour to reproduce all the subtle delicacies of tone, all the exquisite varieties of form, all the magical effects of light and shade which inexhaustible nature is constantly presenting to our view, while the heart is bowed down with care, is to court certain failure. "Painting," as Sir Joshua remarks, "is a jealous mistress," and requires absolute devotion from her followers.

So Glyn struggled on as best he could until he was brought face to face with the thought that his finances were coming absolutely to an end. Money must be supplied to keep his people going at Brighton; money he must have to keep himself going, though, indeed, he had reduced his own expenses to the lowest possible sum consistent with the respectable appearance his position and pursuits demanded. Moreover, these excursions with the widow cost something, although she was as scrupulously careful to pay her way as she could be under the circumstances. Still, it was impossible to let her pay for every shilling cab or sixpenny catalogue, and even these run into money in the course of time.

Sib had gone to Brighton with Kate and her mother. The widow had arranged this. A change was necessary for the girl. She had struck up a great friendship with Kate. They would be helpful to each other. The thought of returning home after what had occurred was utterly distasteful to her; and the sufferings of that last day in Bruton Street had been so dreadful that the idea of returning there had not even been suggested. So she asked and obtained permission to go with Kate, to whom she clung with an eagerness not to be resisted.

"Might I speak to you for a moment, sir?" asked Glyn's landlady, about a week after his mother's departure, and just as he was about to leave for his morning walk to the widow's.

Glyn had an intuitive perception of what was coming, and his heart sank.

"Certainly, Mrs. Watson; but I am rather in a hurry. What is it?"

"Well, sir, I hope you'll excuse me, but you see, sir, the young lady being here and all has put me about a goodish bit. If it would be convenient to let me have a little money on account of the fortnight's bill, I should be greatly obliged."

Glyn turned away to take up his hat, and to hide the consternation with which he heard this premature demand. There was nothing unreasonable in it, of course. Mrs. Watson had been put to many

little expenses on account of the sudden accession to the number of her lodgers under such peculiar circumstances, and she was not overburthened with spare cash. The demand, however, fell upon Glyn like a thunderbolt.

"If you will leave the account, I will see about it by-and-by, Mrs. Watson," he said, with as much calmness as he could command,

"Thank you, sir, and if you could make it convenient before seven this evening, it would be a great help to me, sir."

"I'll see what I can do," said Glyn, taking the bill.

Mrs. Watson left the room. Glyn opened the paper which she had left in his hand. Considering the condition of his purse the amount was sufficiently staggering. He sat contemplating the total for a considerable time.

"How on earth is it to be managed!" he at length exclaimed.

Of course, the most sensible thing would have been to have told his landlady that it was not convenient for a day or two, but sensitive people are not, as a rule, sensible, and Glyn worked himself into a fever over the thought of how he was to meet his landlady that evening without the money. Possibly, if he had not been weighted with other cares he might have thrown this off; but the succession of disappointments and anxieties which he had undergone had shaken his system and caused him to take an exaggerated view of everything.

He set out on his way to Bruton Street, feeling unusually oppressed and unfit for work. He strove hard to battle with the feeling. He knew that the fact of finishing the widow's picture successfully would bring him pecuniary relief, and possibly lead to more work. It was useless reasoning. Reasoning cannot dispel the effects of a severe mental shock. Some stronger remedies are required.

In crossing Bond Street he came suddenly upon Forbes, who was as stout as ever, and appeared to be taking life with his usual serenity.

"Beverley, by Jove! Awfully glad to see you. I was coming to look you up. But, I say, you're looking seedy, don't you know. You want another cruise in the *May-fly*."

"I've been rather hard at work," answered Glyn evasively. "I shouldn't at all mind another trip——"

He stopped abruptly, for the thought of his present state of gloom, contrasted with the hopefulness of heart which had been his in the trip to the Land's End, almost choked him.

"I suppose you've heard the news," Forbes went on. "Deuced odd thing she should have taken to D'Eyncourt after all. Thought she had pitched him over for good. I hear they are to be married next month."

Every word of this was a dagger to Glyn. "He has heard it too," he thought. "All the world seems to know it. He hastened to get away. "I know you'll forgive me, but I am late for my appointment. I shall be so glad if you can look me up at my studio."

"All right, don't let me keep you. It must be awfully queer to be in a hurry—never was in a hurry in my life. Look here, old man, come and dine with me at the Club to-night. I want to have a chat with you about this affair, don't you know?"

"I'm afraid I can't to-night," stammered Glyn. "Come and see me first. I'm very busy at present."

"That's all right," said unsuspecting Forbes. "R.A. one of these days, I expect. By the way, I don't see Blanche's picture in the Exhibition."

"No—they didn't hang it," said Glyn, with another knife in his heart.

"Not hang it—by Jove! Nothing prettier there—that's my notion. Well, it don't much matter if you're busy, does it? Money tumbling in in cart loads, I expect."

"Well, not exactly," said Glyn, with a vivid consciousness of the scantiness of his purse. "We don't make fortunes in a week, you know."

The conversation was becoming intolerable to him. Blunt, good-natured Forbes had stumbled upon every topic which was calculated to increase the mental torture he was undergoing. Glyn bade him a hasty adieu, and hurried on with a sensation of reckless despair.

Yet if he had taken the trouble to inquire, he would have found that Forbes had gathered his information about Blanche from the same source as himself, namely, Mrs. Byng. For some reason best known to herself, that far-seeing little widow had not mentioned to Forbes that she was sitting to Glyn for her portrait, consequently her name did not crop up. Glyn naturally concluded that the engagement was the talk of the town.

He hastened on his way. Through all this trying time he had never felt so dispirited, so utterly cast down as he did this morning. That request of his landlady, trifling as it was, was the last straw. The widow for a wonder did not notice his depression. She was unusually talkative, but this only tended to increase Glyn's gloom. He really felt seriously ill. His hand shook, the colours seemed to blend confusedly. He had no correct appreciation of what he was doing. His whole system was unstrung.

He struggled on for half an hour with a pain at his heart, and an absolute oppression of brain such as he had never felt before. The widow's incessant rattle of words almost maddened him. At last he could bear it no longer. He put down his palette.

"Mrs. Byng. I really feel awfully ill. I am afraid I must give it up."

He sank into a chair and clasped his hand tightly over his face, as if to shut out his trouble. One deep heart-wrung groan broke from him. Then he was quite still. He was conscious of a hand stealing round his neck and then into his own.

"I cannot tell you how I long to comfort you, Glyn," the widow said. "Oh, if I only had the right!"

No man could resist sympathy at such a time. Glyn pressed the hand that lay in his with a feeling of gratitude, but he did not look up.

"You know how I betrayed my weakness when we were on the Cornish coast," the widow went on. "You have never once made me feel how weak I was. It was very noble and generous of you, but it only makes me fonder of you than ever—weaker than ever. I cannot help telling you when I see you broken down like this. If you would only let me save you from all this worry that I know is wearing you out, what a happiness it would be to me."

A mad impulse rushed through Glyn's brain. The acts that influence a life are often the birth of a moment. He looked up suddenly, and rose from his chair.

"My secret cannot be hidden from you," he said. "Do you mean to tell me you would marry me knowing what is in my heart—knowing my love for another woman?"

"Who does not love *you*! Remember that. You could not continue to love her when you know she has forsaken you for another."

"Do not trifle with me, Mrs. Byng. I am in a desperate mood. If you mean to say you will take me, with all my cares and poverty—with a ruined heart—I am yours; and so help me, heaven, I will strive to make you a good husband!"

A delicious sensation of triumph stole into the widow's heart. Her aim was accomplished. She had gained the end for which she had schemed and plotted through so many months. She put her hands on Glyn's shoulders, and laid her cheek on his breast.

"Oh, Glyn, this is too much happiness!" she said. "I have no fear but what you will grow to love me, for I love you so dearly. It is dreadful for me to confess it again, but I cannot help it."

Glyn put his arms round her in response to her loving words, and then her eyes looked up to his with a devotion he could not mistake. He stooped and pressed a kiss upon her pretty lips, and thus in five minutes was wrought the one fatal error of his life.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NEMESIS.

AND now, Glyn, you must let me claim the privilege of helping you. I know you are bothered about money matters. It is useless your trying to conceal the fact. I have seen it for a long time."

"I cannot borrow from you even now, Laura; I'm afraid."

The utterance of the Christian name was an effort to him. In some way it jarred upon him. Of course, under the circumstances, anything else would have been absurd. Mrs. Byng had no such hesitation, however.

"Why, Glyn, dear, you are as proud as Lucifer. I don't want you to borrow. You have only to take what you have earned."

"But I have not yet earned it."

"Yes, you have. All artists get half payment in advance. You are too proud to ask for it, but you know it is your due. Indeed you would have earned the whole, if I had not asked you to take me to so many places. I was so fond of having you with me, Glyn."

"You are a dear little woman, and have been awfully good to me," said Glyn, kissing her again.

In truth he could not help liking her very much. Not with the feeling that he should have entertained towards his future wife, but he trusted that would come. Her house had always been open to him; he had always been received with the brightest smiles; she had striven to help him in every way. How could he help liking her? Moreover, it was evident that she loved him very dearly, and this is always flattering to a man's vanity. He cannot but feel a warm regard for a woman who places him before all the rest of the world in her affections, even if his own are set upon another object.

So Glyn walked home to his landlady that morning with a fifty pound note in his pocket, which he tried hard to feel was his in virtue of his having earned it.

It is astonishing what a lightness of heart a man feels even in the midst of acute mental trials when he is suddenly relieved from the additional worry and irritation of pecuniary difficulties. My good lords and ladies and millionaires, you have your trials, no doubt, like all the rest of Eve's children. You see your children torn from your side by the ruthless hand of death. You mourn a deeply loved parent, or husband, or wife. You find your best motives misconstrued; you strive to benefit your fellow-creatures, and you are accused of sordid ends. You are a mark for the shafts of calumny, anger, and scorn; you suffer all the ills which divine Will Shakspeare sums up in such pregnant words in that immortal soliloquy of Hamlet's, but you have not the additional grievance which the poor man has of not knowing where to get your dinner, or how to pay your next quarter's rent. It is not the man who fumes at the injustice of mankind, or the hard strokes of fate from the midst of luxurious couches who is the hero. It is he who struggles for his daily pittance in the midst of mental tortures which bring the sleepless pillow and the worn and jaded brow.

It was an immense relief to Glyn, no doubt, this sudden turn of fortune. He not only gave his landlady something on account, but paid her up to the end of the fortnight. He sat down and wrote a long letter to his sister, telling her all that had occurred, and sending her a five-pound note for any little extras they might require. He was not at all sure how Kate would receive the news. He feared it would be a shock to her, but the thing was done, and could not now be undone. He argued that he had been driven to this course

by the faithlessness of Blanche (who, be it remembered, had never promised to be faithful), and by the hard blows of fortune; and indeed the most carping critic, on reviewing all the circumstances of the case, must have found some excuse for him.

He did not, however, give himself much time to reflect. He had promised to take the widow out that afternoon, and she looked so bright and rosy when she met him at the door attired for the walk, that Glyn must have been a cynic indeed not to feel a little proud of her. As for the widow she was in such exuberant spirits that Glyn could not help feeling a little reflected happiness in the thought of the happiness he had conferred. They walked and they shopped, and she bought all sorts of pretty things for her future lord—studs, and sleeve-links, and the like—at prices which startled Glyn, who had been brought up with the strictest notions of economy. He began to think the widow's resources were practically unlimited, though to do him justice he had never taken the trouble to ascertain what she was worth.

Then they went back to Bruton Street, and Forbes came to dinner, and was told all about it, and opened his eyes wider than they had opened for a very considerable period. And who should drop in in the evening but Reginald Barker—a very rare visitor in Bruton Street except on state occasions. He, too, soon divined how the land lay, and looked rather grave. Perhaps he thought that a gay young widow, fond of dress and life and society, was not exactly the wife to help a young painter up the ladder of fame. Barker was too much of a man of the world, however, to trouble himself about other people's follies, and the cloud soon passed. They had music and chat and coffee, and there was much laughter, and many sparkling things dropped from Barker's lips, at which Forbes sat and roared. So the excitement was kept up until a late hour, and when Glyn said good-night some half-hour or so after the others, the widow was so pretty and loving, and looked so happy, that he fancied himself half in love with her in return, and so pursued his way to his lodgings with a lighter heart than he had known for many a day.

But, Nemesis was to follow. A man cannot propose to a pretty widow, receive the congratulations of her friends, have presents showered upon him, and (after dining on everything of the best) spend the evening in pleasant converse without undergoing a certain amount of excitement, even if he have a heavy grief weighing on his heart. The excitement keeps him going until the end of the day, even through the last cigar which he smokes before seeking his pillow.

It is in the dead of night that the reaction comes. We go to sleep thinking that our grief is well-nigh at an end. We slumber heavily—say, for three hours. Suddenly, and for no apparent reason, we are wide awake, gazing into the black void of the darkened room. There is an agonised rush of thought—the excitement is gone—and the

truth lies before us bare and cold, stripped of all disguises, wringing our hearts with intolerable anguish.

So it was with Glyn. He slept heavily for some hours. He dreamed, as he often did, of Lupton and those exquisite days of the last summer. This time, too, his dream assumed a phase more than ordinarily delicious. He was with Blanche, wandering away into the summer woods. An infinite field of pure, bright, spotless blue lay far above; a shimmer of silver sunlight was on the leafage around; a fragrance of moss and fern and flowers stole up and touched the inner senses with an exquisite joy. There was no barrier between himself and the girl he loved. The unfettered immunity of dreams had dispelled all conventionalities. For them was love alone, and the joyous nature around. She was close by his side. Her sweet eyes gazing up into his, the flush of perfect joy on her cheek, the smile of perfect love on her lips. He drew her towards him, a delirious joy thrilled him, his lips approached hers, but ere they came in contact the very intensity of his joy broke the spell, and he awoke.

"What a delicious dream!" he exclaimed.

The spell was on him still—so intense, so vivid, had been his dream.

Suddenly came the rush of thought. She was in Italy—engaged to D'Eyncourt.

It cut his heart literally like a knife. Another moment, and then came the thought of what he himself had done. Plighted himself to a woman he did not love—whom he could never love as a husband should love a wife. His dream had driven this truth irresistibly into his burning brain, and his deed rose before him in all its bare hideousness. Was he mad when he did this thing? False to Blanche? false to himself? false to honour, manliness, and self-respect? The truth so gripped his heart, that the agony was more than he could endure. He half rose in his bed, pressing his hands tightly on his beating temples, vainly striving to soothe the turmoil of his brain.

"Oh!" he cried; "is it come to this?"

He rose and paced the room. He deluged his head with cold water. All in vain. Thought crowded on thought, agony on agony. What if Blanche were false to him? was this any reason why, in a moment of mad impulse and spite, he should give himself to another woman? A woman who had no thought in common with him; a woman bent on all things he despised. To have been true to the memory of Blanche, even through years of suffering, would have brought more permanent peace than the love of any other woman in the world. But now, how had he sold himself! For what a future had he sacrificed his self-respect! Well might he exclaim, with Claude Melnotte, "Give me back my poverty and my honour."

But it might yet be undone. It was not yet too late. He would go to the widow in the morning; point out to her the deep wrong he had done her; show her the impossibility of permanent happiness

under such circumstances. On reflection she must see the thing in the same light as he did. She would not be unreasonable. She would set him free. Blanche should know that however cruelly she had behaved, he had at least been true to her. Yes, this is what he would do the first thing in the morning.

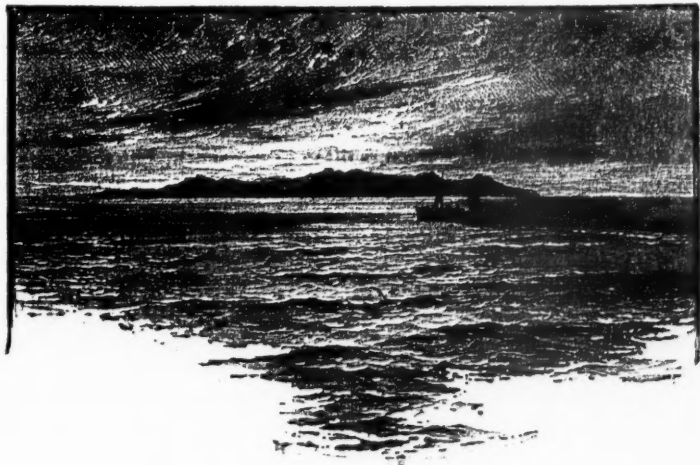
With another rush came the thought of Forbes and Barker, of the widow's presents, of the fifty pounds, of all the little woman's goodness and happiness. What right had he selfishly to blight her hopes? to hold her up to the ridicule of her friends? No right. He had been a mad, blind fool; but he was pledged in honour to fulfil his engagement. He could not blink this fact. She knew he loved another woman, but she had taken him with all her heart. There was but one course open to him—to marry her.

"Then let it be speedily," he cried, with a sigh which seemed to rend his heart. "Let the climax come as quickly as possible, then I shall know the worst, and things may grow better. Better! Is there a better for me? It seems to me that my whole future will be a purposeless hell."

He tossed about restlessly for another hour. Then came the morning light and he grew calmer. Who does not know the soothing effect of the morning light after a night of sleeplessness and grief?

"Yes, I will ask her to marry me at once," he said. "It can be in some quiet country church without any fuss or ceremony. Then we will go abroad, away from all thoughts and associations with the past. Away from all thoughts of *her*. Then, perhaps, I may at last learn to forget. Pray heaven I may! Pray heaven I may!"

(To be continued.)



THE MARRIAGE MARKET AT BABYLON.

BY J. F. ROWBOTHAM.

I.

IT was the day of the marriage market in Babylon, which was held on the first day of every sixth month, to dispose, in a summary but most effectual manner, of all the marriageable maidens in the town.

The great square of Asshur was full of people, chiefly parents and their children, whom they were introducing to the inspection of the officers charged with the regulation of the auction, and endeavouring to have them entered on the lists of the "beauties" or the "frights," according as their own sense of dignity or regard for profit weighed heaviest on their mind. Two long parchment rolls were hanging up from the collars of a pair of winged bulls made of porphyry, which rose in the square; and on each roll was a goodly catalogue of names, to which there constantly came additions.

Fathers kept arriving with recalcitrant daughters; mothers with the same article of commerce; unmarried women of a certain age by themselves; widows in the green and yellow mourning worn by the Assyrians. Sometimes mothers and daughters would arrive hand in hand, and inscribing their names, one on one catalogue, one on the other, would take their places in the large pens or wicker enclosures, where swarms of women, of every rank, age, and degree, were waiting for the auction to begin which was to decide their fate, and get them, ere the afternoon closed, that most desirable of all commodities—a husband. They waited in tranquil confidence the issue of events.

What were these two rolls which everybody so ceaselessly visited as the preliminary to their entrance into the market?

At the head of one of them, written in cuneiform letters, were the words "The Beauties;" at the head of the other the inscription "The Frights." Each woman must make her choice of which catalogue she would prefer to be placed in.

Perhaps it may be conjectured that the second catalogue of the two would be a very diminutive one, and that no women would voluntarily enrol their names in a class so despised. But this is evidently a mistake, judging from the crowds who are inscribing themselves with complete nonchalance in the unenviable catalogue. The fact being that to rank as a "fright" brings certain advantages to its possessor, to be hereafter mentioned. So great is the run, indeed, on the latter roll, that certain officers are stationed—among

them the chief matrons of the queen's household—to inspect the faces of the women who are so very anxious to pose as ugly, and to turn them back if they are prettier than they pretend to be.

In the neighbourhood of the market, all round the square, at the open windows of booths and taverns are men carousing—the future bidders in the ceremony—who are thus beguiling their spare time till the blasts of the trumpet from the square shall summon them to take part in the proceedings.

Among these thus engaged in the wine-booths of the *Pelican* were two men playing dice with the large cork cubes employed for that purpose by the Assyrians, and rattling them in crystal boxes, made of that peculiar glass which may yet be seen by those who search for it among the ruins of Babylon.

One of them was losing furiously.

"By the foot of Nelo," he exclaimed, "my house, my money-chest, my everything seems yours. I have but one more stake to play for—my luck in the marriage market to-day, where I propose to recover my losses by the acquisition of a rich if not a very handsome wife."

"Her dowry be it then!" exclaimed his companion. "If she have any——"

"Be sure of that," replied the other, "or trust me I shall not be fool enough to jump into the sea of matrimony, where not even Dagon our god, fish though he be, managed to swim secure."

"Come along then," said his companion, rattling the cork dice inside the glass box. "I cast fifteen spots," and they were soon immersed in the interests of their game.

Fortune seemed to favour the intending participator in the auction. On the strength of the dowry of his new wife, he staked a thousand darics and won, which emboldened him to fresh efforts. Not content with his good fortune pure and simple, he resolved that everybody in the booth should share it likewise, and accordingly ordered flagons of wine to be opened and eatables provided for the benefit of whosoever liked to take them, saying that he was now on the winning side and every one should share his good fortune with him. His luck at the dice continued to maintain itself moderately well. By drawing large instalments from the imaginary revenue of his future wife, he had managed to advance the materials for heavy bets which he frequently won, and so regained a great deal of the credited money he had actually lost; yet so deeply was he in his friend's debt, that when he rose from play he still owed him a large balance in addition to the fortune and possessions which at an early stage of the game had been lost outright. The signal of his rising was the blast of a trumpet from the market-place, which seemed to spread consternation and general bustle among all those in the booth, and to cause a stampede in the direction of the square.

The landlord had enough to do in nimbly intercepting his retreating guests before they reached the threshold, and exacting from them the

price of their score before he would suffer them to depart. It now came to the turn of Phranzes—for such was the dice-player's name—to undergo the ordeal of the landlord's interrogation.

"O man of Babylon," began mine host, "thou owest me forty-seven darics and a half for the brave entertainment that you have given to all the company here. I desire thee to give me the money therefore before thou jost and mixen with the multitudes in the square where I may no more see thee."

"The money, no! my promise, yes!" replied Phranzes, endeavouring to push past him. "I am going to be married. I will pay all my debts out of my wife's portion—yours among the number."

"And are you one of those," exclaimed a woman's voice in the rear, and the wife of the landlord inserted herself between them and joined in the conversation, "who would take a plain and ill-tempered woman for the sake of the money she brings you, rather than stand up like a man and bid for the prizes in the market? Out upon you! May Astarte consume your nails by the brightness of her splendour!"

"I am one of those," replied Phranzes, "who do as they are compelled. I have your husband's bill to pay, and what's more my heavy debts elsewhere."

"Then in me," exclaimed the woman setting her arms a-kimbo, "you do not see one of those sort of wives such as you seek. No! my husband paid fifteen hundred darics for me this day seven years on the feast of Baal and the day of the new moon. There were many pretty maidens in the market, and I was one of the dearest, I promise you."

"So I should suppose," replied Phranzes, endeavouring to mollify her, "from the large amount of good looks you retain to the present day. Why, if you were to stand in the market this moment, I wager my purse, if I had one, that you would command the largest price of any woman your age."

"A dear bargain she has been to me," remarked the husband, interposing. "When I add up all the apparel and jewels she has cost me, let alone the price I gave for her, I feel that I should have been a rich man now, if I had only had the luxury of never setting eyes on her."

"You see what it is," said Phranzes endeavouring to side with the husband in turn. "You should have taken my plan when you were at it. You entered the market a rich man, you left it a poor one with an encumbrance; I enter it a poor man, I leave it a rich one."

And as he said these words he again attempted to thrust his way past to the market-place, where the trumpet was clamorously summoning intending buyers to the auction now being held.

"Pay us our score!" screamed husband and wife together, at variance on other points, but united in this. "Pay us our score before you stir from the door."

"My good people," expostulated Phranzes, "it is all in vain. See," and as he spoke he turned the pockets of his long red robe inside

out before them, "I have actually got nothing. Let me go. Every moment is of the highest importance to me. A slight delay may be my ruin."

"Pay us our score!" repeated the host and hostess.

"I'll tell you what I will do," said Phranzes, after an unsuccessful effort to free himself. "I will give you a promise under my seal, or under yours since mine has departed from me, to pay you the full sum out of my wife's dowry this evening. I will seal and attest it, and hereby order you to prepare the best supper you can provide, since I will bring her with me to taste the entertainment of your house."

After much demur, the bargain was agreed to in default of any better. The landlord produced a leaden seal and a stick of yellow wax; and drawing a sheet of papyrus from a cupboard he hastily drew upon it with a sharp steel instrument various cuneiform symbols, purporting to express the method of payment which Phranzes had proposed. The wax was heated; the seal was applied; and Phranzes sprang out of the window of the chamber which opened on to the great square of Asshur just as the last notes of the trumpet had died away, and simultaneously, as was always the case, the auction had commenced.

II.

HIS efforts to push his way through a surging crowd so far delayed him that the bidding had been going on some little time when he arrived at the scene of action—a broad space kept sufficiently select by ropes and other barriers as to be free from the jostling multitudes in the square at large, and itself filled with men who meant business: intending husbands, duly authenticated by name, who were so placed that they might command a close view of the bevy of beauty which time after time was being submitted to the hammer.

A flat form elevated almost to the chins of the purchasers rose opposite them, on which the auctioneer stood, and whereon the girls were conducted one by one from the pens behind, where, separated in classes and divisions, they awaited the summons of the auctioneer.

The precise specimen of beauty who was commanding the attention of the public when Phranzes arrived before the platform was a Babylonian girl of surpassing beauty, with long black hair reaching almost to her knees, and exquisitely chiselled features of that dark olive shade so common among the Assyrian maidens. Her handsome dress of green and gold set off to advantage an elegant figure. Five thousand pieces of silver had been offered for her and refused. At last a fat merchant of the town, who was anxious to quit the state of single blessedness, bid a couple of hundred extra and secured her at that figure. The money was paid over to the clerk of the

auctioneer, a receipt was duly given, and the maiden walked down from the platform into the arms of her husband amid the cheers of the crowd.

A beauty of quite a different type succeeded. She hailed from the northern provinces of Assyria, and was only a Babylonian by education and bringing up. Her face lacked the swarthy tone of her predecessors; her eyes were blue and her hair blonde—an unusual sight in a city of dark-skinned inhabitants, and evoking a variety of chaff from the crowd to the effect that her hair was bleached, etc. She was really a very handsome girl, and among those who admired the style of beauty peculiar to the northern provinces would be reckoned a paragon of loveliness. She did not find much favour with purchasers, however, and was wed for no more than two thousand five hundred pieces of silver, a considerable drop from the price of the preceding lady.

Girls of various types of charm—handsome, beautiful, pretty, and pleasing—were escorted up to the platform and submitted to the bidding of the crowd. By the time the many had dwindled into hundreds, there could be said to be few striking faces among those put up for sale. Hundreds lapsed into two figures—and quite ordinary maidens were brought in at the latter money. By-and-by this came to an end. A Jew offered seven pieces of silver for the last one, but this bid the auctioneer refused to accept, saying that there was no reason that the lady should be insulted by the remembrance of so small a purchase-money, and that she should be brought down and again submitted in the next batch, when the Jew could have her if he liked.

This batch was entitled "The Plain." According to the graphic language of the auctioneer who marshalled the "plain" maidens in a group on the platform—since as there was to be no bidding for them, there was no necessity that they should make separate appearances—a careful selection had been made by most experienced connoisseurs in female beauty, and the maidens here exhibited, although they might possess many charms of mind and temper, showed very few of face. Consequently their feelings were not to be harrowed by competition against others of their sex more favourably endowed by nature, nor were they to be ridiculed hereafter by the stigma of being wed for one piece of silver. No! The magistrates in their wisdom had ordained that the "plain" maidens should be *given* away. "And here," continued the auctioneer, "I offer any single one of these interesting young ladies as a wife to anybody who likes to have her."

The Jew who had set his heart on the maiden for whom he had offered seven pieces, very soon came to terms on the understanding that he was to give nothing; and carried off his bride in triumph. Husbands were found for a good many of the girls. A few were left unmated; and amid a great deal of good-humoured raillery were

driven down into the pens again to come up with the third and final batch.

With much solemnity the auctioneer produced the great scroll which had been hanging at the entry of the auction platform, and commenced to read the names of the next class who would be introduced to the attention of the public, graphically headed "The Frights." "Most of these ladies," he said, "possessed some personal defect—such as a squint, a humpback, a lame limb, and sundry other failings of nature—and it has been the wisdom of the government to grant them portions out of the sums acquired by their more beautiful sisters, so that all shall be happily married, and that the city of Babylon shall not possess an old maid within its walls, not even though she be as ugly as Hecate and as ill-tempered as the Furies of the infernal regions."

It was now Phranzes' time to come forward, which he accordingly did, and planted himself as near the platform as possible—not, probably, to see his destined bride and regale his eye with her features, but rather to be close to the auctioneer that he might strike the bargain promptly and successfully. Around him were a number of dissolute and impecunious fellows, who were evidently on the same errand as he, and were in hopes to pay their debts by "swallowing," as the Babylonian adage went, "the portion of a wife."

The Frights were brought on to the platform one by one, as the Beauties had been; and first of all a few very plain girls, who scarcely deserved the severer designation, were put off with portions of twenty, thirty, up to a hundred pieces of silver apiece. But after that there was a considerable reluctance among the male candidates for matrimony, which needed all the auctioneer's eloquence to overcome.

The first Fright fully deserved the name. She possessed the most ill-favoured expression of face which nature could have devised, and wore an air of sullen temper which boded ill to the unfortunate who took her for better or worse. The auctioneer, in his endeavour to recommend her good points, told his customers to look at her hair which was black and glossy, her eyes which sparkled with everlasting fire, her shoulders which were broad and masculine; and wound up by offering two hundred pieces of silver to anybody who would marry her.

"Not good enough!" cried a man in the crowd. "Why, for such a woman as that we should want five hundred at least."

There seemed to be a sort of confederacy among the intending husbands according to which they worked together; for none of them would accept the first Fright on the list under five hundred pieces, on which terms she was knocked down to a little Babylonian, who received the money with great glee, and walked off with his ill-favoured mate amid the hootings of the crowd.

The next lady was afflicted with a very pronounced squint, and with the additional inelegance of having one shoulder higher than the

other. Six hundred, seven hundred, and eventually a thousand pieces were offered to an accommodating husband, and at the latter figure accepted. Several other women were portioned off at this price, and the crowd of husbands under the platform had got thinner.

Still Phranzes' turn had not come yet. He was well aware that a thousand pieces of silver would be no good to him in his embarrassments. The expense of the banquet at the wine-booth alone would make a very considerable inroad into such a sum; and when he added his gambling debts thereto, the figure was entirely insignificant. He must fly at higher game. So he said to the man next him.

"I shall be content," his neighbour replied, "with three or four thousand, and shall go at that bidding. I hear there's a hag in store of diabolical ugliness—the pick of this auction, and of all auctions within recent memory. Twenty thousand pieces will be wanted to make her go off; and they are prepared to give it. If you have a desire for the money, there's your chance. Still, I should be afraid to face her."

"Not I!" replied Phranzes. "In my case necessity has no laws!"

The man who had spoken "went"—to use his own phrase—at four thousand pieces. Phranzes saw the crowd of husbands rapidly diminishing, and in a short time there was only himself and a few others in the arena.

It was now that the auctioneers skilfully brought forward their "reserve"—the last woman in the show, for whose benefit they were prepared to spend a larger figure than had been known for some years past.

"It's true," they said, "that we left her to the very end; but that was not because we reckoned her the greatest Fright of all, but at her express desire that she might not spoil the competition of her sisters. We ourselves, individually, if one of us were single, would very willingly wed a lady like this; and in submitting her to your judgment for determination, we hope that you will come to a similar conclusion at the lowest figure possible. Approach, Melvauka!"

The multitudes in the square had gathered round the barriers in vast numbers to have a glimpse at this most ugly of all the Frights. The husbands, six in number, who still waited in the arena, quaked at the prospect which was before them. But no tongue and no pencil could describe the fearful sight of transcendent ugliness which met the gaze of so many eyes when Melvauka appeared on the platform.

"Were I to recount," said the auctioneer, interpreting the thoughts of the people, now that the object was revealed to view, "all the imperfections of nature, all the blemishes, all the ungraceful, ugly, and hideous points of which humanity is capable, I never could exhaust the ugliness of this woman; for she seems in a manner to have exceeded mortal bounds in the matter, and to have created a species for herself in which she reigns the solitary representative!"

One look at the woman sent all the husbands scampering out of the arena, with the exception of Phranzes, who doggedly held his ground.

"I offer," said the auctioneer, "a dowry of twenty thousand pieces of silver to any Babylonian who will take this woman to wife."

A profound silence reigned through the whole square. Not a soul made a motion of reply. Phranzes alone felt any inclination to answer, and the inclination passed away from his white lips when he looked on the monster before him. But his eye fell almost simultaneously upon the wine-booth where he owed the account which he had promised under seal to pay; and immediately to the right of it was the house of his principal creditor, Aalunes, who had obtained from him, in the gambling affray, all his property and every farthing of his cash, and at whose mercy he practically was, to dispose of, even into slavery, if the debts were not almost immediately discharged.

There was no help for it. Having gone thus far, he might as well see the matter to its end. And shutting his eyes, Phranzes murmured out in answer to the question of the auctioneer, "I will."

At once a storm of hooting and groans arose in the crowd such as it is difficult to imagine. Missiles came in a shower about the ears of the fortune-seeking husband, and the populace were with difficulty restrained by the officers from breaking through the barriers to mob him. The money, however, was paid to Phranzes, and the woman handed over to his possession, the officer pronouncing as he did so the legal formula that made them man and wife.

To touch her was a matter of horror to Phranzes; to look at her filled him with loathing. Nevertheless, being a man of gallantry, he extended to her the tips of his fingers with the view of conducting her out of the arena into the square. She trembled at the sight of the howling mob around, and, as his eyes once more fell on her, Phranzes saw that she was sobbing violently.

"Why are you weeping," he asked.

"Have I not cause to weep," said the woman, "at being conducted from my peaceful home and made the laughing-stock of the populace at my ugliness, which may the gods forgive? I fear the insults and missiles of the crowd without. I have passed such a day of anguish that I care not to live any longer. I have hitherto lived in seclusion by myself, far from eyes that could ridicule and tongues that could decry. I cannot bear these public affronts and jeers—their derision kills me. Whither art thou taking me?"

"To the wine-booth garden," replied Phranzes, "where I have ordered an entertainment in your honour, and whither it will be my pleasure to conduct you as my wife."

"This is the first kind action I have ever had shown me. Would that I could reward you as I ought. I know what that reward should be, yet I fear to give it you."

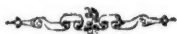
They had now got into the public square, where crowds of people jostled and jeered them, handling them both very roughly. The un-

fortunate woman, almost beside herself with fright and shame, by the time they had arrived at the middle of the square gazed at the sea of faces round her in terror and dismay.

Suddenly she sprang from the arm of Phranzes into the middle of the crowd, who gave way before her as if she were some Pythoness in her frenzy, and left a vacant space around her.

"Oh, ye cowards and dastards!" said the woman. "Now I can reward my husband in a way such as never Babylonian woman has done before. He has kindly and nobly taken me for his wife, and he shall be spared the insults which will pursue him all his life on my account. The money he has received with me he shall keep; but he shall be rid of the ugly wife who gave it him, who thus confers on him the greatest boon it is in her power to bestow!"

As she said these last words she drew a knife from her bosom, and with one determined blow pierced her breast, falling dead at the feet of Phranzes. The crowd rolled back, terrified and amazed at the tragic conclusion to the auction, and hastily regretted that they had carried their insults too far. But Phranzes, after bestowing decent burial on the poor woman, who had so signally befriended him, was enabled by an extraordinary accident to pay his score at the wine-booth, his debt to his creditor Aalunes, and to commence a new life which he managed with greater dexterity than his old one, so as never to require to visit the marriage market again with a view to supplying the necessities of his purse.



SPRING SONG.

As in cool leaves the violets hide
In secret sweetness closely curled,
While flaunting crocus in her pride
Compels the worship of the world;
So lies my love hid in my heart—
Ah, will the green leaves never part?

As those who walk the garden ways,
In glad renaissance of the spring,
Regild the crocus with their praise,
While violets, hid, lie languishing;
So you with gold-tressed Delia stray—
Ah, will you never look my way?

E NESBIT.

BROTHER CHRISTIAN'S ADVENTURE.

BROTHER
CHRIS-

TIAN moved about among the travellers in the hospice on ministering duties. He had kind words and gentle accents for all. To new arrivals, chilled and frozen from their long

ascent, he brought glasses of hot spiced wine. The peasants from the valleys he directed on their journey

southwards. To inquiring pilgrims he exhibited the relics and curiosities of the convent, and

listened with attitude of courteous attention to their news of the outer world. The air was cold, even for this region of perpetual snows, with every opening of the door the bleak north blast drove in. The visitors gathered their wraps about them and wondered how they could survive even a few hours in this place of life-in-death.

But in the monk's heart there was a dream of summer. As to sailors on the wild salt waste of waters are borne breaths of earth's fragrance, the sweetness of trees and flowers, so to him in this white waste world of snow had come a vision of life-giving verdure. The scent of woods new-washed with warm reviving showers was in his nostrils. He stood on the pebbly shore by the clear blue level of his native lake, and by his side was his betrothed bride. Behind them the way stretched green to the foot of the hills, and climbed up to the village and orchards and vineyards. Beautiful in the distance rose the snow-capped Alps, their whiteness warmed with the roseate glow of sunset. Their tinge was reflected in pale crimson lustre on the waters. But more beautiful than the reflection of sunlight on the lake was the face of his Elise. He was about to speak to her when the voice of one of his guests recalled him from his dream.

"And your winter lasts through nine months of the year!"

"Ah, yes, madame, and the other three are cold."

His questioner shivered and drew her shawl closer. "Oh, you are saints," she said. "None but saints could thus tear themselves from earth and make their home up here above the clouds."

"Or fools," a voice beside him seemed to mutmur.

The monk's thoughts had wandered off again. Once more he was uttering his vows in the ear of his Elise, vows which were so soon to be broken and replaced by others. He saw the look of piteous submission on her face when he told her of the withdrawal of his hopes from earth to heaven; he heard the tones in which at last she consented to his sacrifice, and relinquished him to God.

"Leaving her to pine away," he mused. For he had heard news of her that day from a shepherd of one of the Alp pastures. That she was wearing her life out in attendance on the afflicted and diseased, that life which, as now it seemed to him, had been entrusted to his care.

"Ah! what if in his case happiness had been also duty—if sacrifice should have been sin!"

Once more the traveller's knock resounded in his ears, with a harsh sound breaking on his reverie. Lantern in hand he hastened to the door and flung it open. The dreary landscape without glimmered wan in the twilight. Around him, shrouded in fog, towered the desolate heights all icily indifferent to the human habitation in their midst. Not a soul was in sight. No sound of life disturbed the awful stillness, only from far echoed the fall of an avalanche, as if some frozen peak were uttering its voice.

Brother Christian stepped outside. "Surely I heard a knock," he muttered, peering forth into the gloom, the rays of his lantern illuminating little more than his own eager face. Then raising his voice: "Who is there?" he called. "Welcome, whosoever it may be!"

He moved the light till its rays fell on a cloaked figure that seemed to hang back in the darkening air. A dog who had followed Brother Christian to the door barked loudly, as if he would defend the entrance.

"Down, Mors, down!" commanded the monk. "Thou art not wont to greet travellers after such a fashion. Have you a guide, monsieur, or a mule? the fog obscures my sight."

"I came alone, on foot," returned the stranger, and followed his conductor in.

A motley company were gathered round the fire, which burned low at the further end of the public sitting-room. The new-comer drew near and bent over the grate.

"Your death-cold atmosphere freezes the very blood in my veins," he said. "Permit me to take a log from your store," and without waiting for an answer he piled wood on the embers.

"But excuse me, monsieur," exclaimed Brother Christian, stepping

quickly forward, "you know not with what toil and pains our fuel is borne up the steep mountain side."

"Ah, monsieur, but the mischief is done! I am not used to take warmth by measure," laughed the stranger, and he stretched his hands out over the flames.

"Monsieur, I ween, is from the sweet warm South," said the monk, with a wistful intonation.

"Ah, yes, from the land of love and sunlight, of the vine and the dance, the land where earth is glad and heaven is kind," returned the other. His voice was soft and mellow and had a peculiarly persuasive tone.

The light played on his features as he spoke, and showed a man of sunburnt jovial aspect. Though he complained of cold, an atmosphere of warmth and life seemed to pervade his whole being, making him appear in curious contrast with the bareness and asperity of his surroundings and with the aspect of the monk, whose weather-beaten face was worn and hollowed as if successive mental storms had left their wasting traces there, and in whose eyes burnt the fitful fires as of some consuming secret passion.

II.

MEANWHILE a frugal meal had been served. The stranger followed the others to the table and took his place beside the monk. As Brother Christian, with abstracted mien, attended to his guests, the stranger drew forth a flask of red wine from his breast and filled his own glass and his host's. "To your health, sir monk!" he said, in gay inspiring tones.

The monk hesitated a moment, then raised the glass to his lips and slowly drained it. A warmer colour crept to his thin cheek and a lighter sparkle to his bright sunken eye.

"It tastes of youth," he said dreamily.

The stranger muttered something in an outlandish tongue.

Brother Christian started and rose from the table, leaving his plate untouched. The sweet beguiling dream still held possession of his soul, though from his grave rapt look and serious smile one would have thought it was the beauty of some celestial vision that he dwelt on.

"I see monsieur has a guitar," he said. "I am weary of the organ's tones, so slow and solemn, the heart dies with them—and of the monotonous monkish chant. I crave some light sweet air, a huntsman's jodel, or some shepherd's song. Will monsieur sing us something?"

It seemed he had thrown off in a moment the restraint and reserve of long monastic habit.

"Most gladly," said the stranger. He struck a few soft notes and in a voice that seemed to be laden with the breath of summer seas,

of blossoming vines and all sweet luxurious things, he sang a love-song of the southern valleys, the air of which was yearning and passionate though the words were of the simplest.

Brother Christian drew a deep breath as the last chord trembled into silence.

"Ah! I have sung it myself, I have heard it sung," he said, "in my home amid the chestnut woods, when Paradise was at my feet, not high above me, when all my religion was to be grateful for God's gifts—and the dearest of those gifts was love!"

"True—true," assented the stranger, in his melodious yet matter-of-fact tones, "and he who scorns earth's joys may haply find himself fooled out of both worlds. What reward can he expect who of himself quits Paradise, whom no angel drove forth, only his own ungracious suspicions? Nay! an angel would have barred the way, pointing back to happiness and duty. But some men are blinder than Balaam's ass."

Brother Christian felt no surprise to hear his heart's secret doubts and struggles thus expressed by another. With a sudden bitter revulsion his thoughts had turned from their sunlit, love-blest wanderings to the cold reality of his actual lot, which by contrast seemed unendurable.

"But some must needs leave all and follow Him," he said, "else He would have no witnesses on earth."

"Some there are that can rest not in the things of this world," returned the other. "To them 'tis no sacrifice to leave earth's loveliest things. Born monks, their way lies straight up barren heights to heaven. No life, their own or others, is marred, no heart is broken by their vows. But of thee, what did God require but not to forget Him in the midst of thy happiness!"

"Next to the sunshine," said Brother Christian, "did I love to enter His church and rest within His shade. Thither would follow me my little Elise. When I crossed my childish brow with the holy water she would reach to the basin's brim till I lifted her up to dip her finger in, and cross her own. My little Elise, whom I forsook! Shall I ever forget her look when I bade her farewell, reproachful half, and half consenting, as she glanced in my face for some sign of pity."

"O cruel and selfish self-denial!" said the stranger. "To the moloch of your own salvation you sacrificed her heart."

"Her heart, and mine. And oh! what if I should have sacrificed Heaven's blessing too?"

"But one thing is clear, my friend," said the stranger, with something like a sneer. "You have made your bed amid the ice and snow, and so must you lie on it."

"Seven long years have I still to pass in this living death," cried the monk despairingly. "But long ere they are over I shall lie withering in the wintry blast, a scorn and a terror to all that see me."

Oh, that God might grant me to die beneath the soft blue skies of my own land ! ”

“Nay, not to die, to live ! ” said the stranger, in sudden accents of compassion.

The monk was wrapt in his own musings.

“To bask, were it but for a moment, in that blessed sun. To feel the grass beneath my feet, and hear the children’s voices at their play. To feel my heart beat with the beatings of nature’s heart. O life ! O love ! O earth, earth, earth ! How fain would I lean my cheek against thy healing breast, and sleep as I have slept in childhood.”

“I pray you, control yourself,” broke in the stranger. “See ! your guests are smiling at your passion. But truly, it was not well for you, with your warm human heart, thus to cut yourself apart from earthly ties. Better could you have served God amid the tumult of life below.”

“Why do you tempt me ? ” cried out the monk, his smouldering desires breaking into sudden flame. “Can you not see how my heart cries out for life and liberty.”

“Let me speak with you apart,” said the stranger. “See, your guests would retire. Conduct them to their rest, but let none discover what is in your heart.”

III.

BROTHER CHRISTIAN and his companion stood together outside the old hospice, which loomed out from amid its grey rocks in the chill light of dawn.

“At last I breathe again ! ” exclaimed the monk. “But the atmosphere of death is still around us. Quick, let us hasten below, beyond the reach of pursuit. Oh, look not back ! I mock my broken vows, I tread them under foot, as I do this snow ! ”

“Nay, you have broken no vows,” said the stranger indulgently. “The beautiful years of your life you have sacrificed to God and your fellows. Its poor dregs you are surely free to drain on the spot you love.”

Imperceptibly the dawn had turned to day, and now the whole frost-bound view was bathed in morning light. The two went swiftly down the path. Through a rift in the clouds they caught a glimpse of grove and meadow shining green beneath them in all their gentle loveliness, like a bit of Paradise amid chaos.

“Onward, only onward ! ” cried the monk. “Away from winter, away from death ! ”

“Downward, downward ! ” echoed the stranger. “Courage, my friend ! Descent is always easy.”

Even as he spoke, softly on the still air was borne to their ears the strains of the “*Laudate Dominum*,” in mingled choir-chant and organ-music from the monastery chapel. Brother Christian paused,

looked upward to the cold blue sky showing small between the up-crowding heights, and dropped upon his knees on the bare rock.

"Ah! nothing less would have sufficed me once," he cried, "than to behold the beauty of His face. But now—but now—I could content me with a place so far from Him that His light could be but faintly visible, enough only to guide me back to Him when my wanderings were over. One earthly blossom were sweeter to me now than all the blooms of Paradise."

At that moment his eye fell on a little crimson flower that grew on the edge of the glacier. Brother Christian plucked it and pressed it passionately to his lips. "Little flower," he said, "thou seemest to me a message from life and love."

IV.

FAIRER and more familiar grew the air and scene. Brother Christian forgot the presence of his companion. He went as if on wings. For frozen waterfalls, fair verdant glades, where the grass was grateful to weary feet, and the sound of flowing waters, long strange to his ear, made music sweeter than aught he could conceive of Heaven's harmonies. For barren rocks, vineyards and chestnut woods, sunning their ripening treasures in the genial noon-day beams. For the bleak wan glamour of perpetual snows, the living sparkle at last, through a loophole in the mountains, of the blue lake in the distance.

"O blessed land!" exclaimed the monk. "I never thought to stand beneath thy soft blue skies, to breathe thy heavenly air again. See! yonder is a shrine to Mary. 'Twas there I used to pray with my Elise. Thither every saint's day we would bring fresh wreaths of flowers, herself the sweetest flower of the offering. Is she still faithful, I wonder, to the maid and me? I pray you, wait here awhile. I would fain entreat the divine mercy on the spot where she so often knelt."

"You seek the Virgin's shrine, another virgin in your thoughts," laughed the stranger. "Such fond divided vows are sure to please."

"Nay, Mary was a woman like the rest. Her heart would not be hard toward love," returned the monk.

Close by the Virgin-mother's shrine, half hidden in a bend of the hillside, stood a large black cross, hung with the implements of Christ's passion. A woman knelt before it, praying aloud. As Brother Christian caught sight of her he started, was about to rush towards her, then stopped abruptly, and, as her voice was borne to him on the still air, dropped softly to his knees and bowed his head.

"Not for myself do I entreat Thee," prayed the woman, "but for him who left me once for Thee. I saw him last night in my dream, saw him tempted and betrayed. But he seemed all unconscious—and death will take him unawares! I have left Thy mother's shrine,

seeing it was not she that died for us. 'Thou only wilt understand my prayer! See, Lord Jesus! I have fasted, toiled, and prayed, all that I might once be fit to meet him in Thy Kingdom, and now must *he* be lost? Put my little good to his account, lay the penalty of his sin on me! O save him, though I may never see him more!"

Her voice was choked in tears. There was a minute's silence, then the monk in awestruck tones took up his prayer.

"Lord Christ, for once deny her supplication! Nay, Lord, I am too vile to speak to Thee. Holy Mother, do *thou* deign to hear! Look not on me, but on my prayer! Thou art a woman, and thou perchance canst read a woman's heart when its thoughts are strange even to Him that made it. Save her from her own heart! Let me perish for my sin, let her forget me! Oh, no, blessed Mary, turn my prayer once more! I know not what I ask for! All within me and without seems turning to death and sin. Let her only love me still though God and all His saints should curse me."

A soft voice broke upon his prayer. "Felix, is it thou!"

The monk started wildly to his feet. "Oh, it is not thou that wilt tempt me—not thou, Elise!"

Her sweet eyes rested on him pityingly. "Nay, to me you are only Brother Christian. Forgive me that for one moment I forgot your sacred character. We shall meet in Paradise. 'Till then, God protect thee!" and she turned away.

He was about to follow, but restrained himself. A light contemptuous laugh resounded in his ears.

"You have let her go; you would lose the last chance heaven has given you—the last chance of happiness and love."

"The last chance!" Brother Christian murmured dreamily. "Oh, yes, my last chance! The voice of God, through her, has called me back to duty. I will return."

"It is too late!" said the other, intercepting him. "There is no place for the deserter."

"I will do penance—I will atone," said Brother Christian, "and I will find forgiveness. Let me pass!"

"As you please," returned his companion coldly. "But it is not so easy. A storm is brewing."

He spoke truly. There had been a curious stillness during the past few minutes. The air had fallen to a complete lull, and the woods stirred not a leaf. Of a sudden, as it seemed, the heavens had grown black, and the wind blew furiously. Darkness as of an eclipse came over the scene. Then from the bosom of the clouds, lightning leaped forth, like the crossing of swords between unseen aerial antagonists, and the answering thunder as of their voices crashed reverberating amongst the Alps. Ere yet the peal had died another and another flash broke dazzling on the gloom. A torrent of hailstones beat against their faces, and the rain came down in a deluge.

"I fear no tempest," said the monk. "My footing on the rocks is sure as that of the chamois."

"Night will have fallen ere you reach the hospice," said the stranger. "The streams have broken their bounds, and the passes are flooded. Hark! Did you hear that cry? It is your Elise. She is wandering, lost in the tempest."

"My God!" cried Brother Christian in an agony, "wilt Thou too tempt me?"

He sped away in the direction of the cry. The storm grew wilder. It seemed the skies had broken their bounds. But wilder still raged the tempest in his brain. As he paused to recover breath, a woman's light shawl was driven against him by the blast, and clearly on his ear, through all the raging of the tempest, broke a low stifled sob.

"Elise!" he said imploringly.

She turned to him with the confiding, timid gesture that had so often haunted his dreams.

"Now," he said, "I defy the powers of light and of darkness. I have found the one thing that I desire." And he raised his arm on high as if he would defend her from the tempest's fury.

As if in answer to his defiance, again the lightning tore the skies. The forest behind them glowed as if on fire. The thunder broke pealing over their very heads. Children of the mountains as they were, many and dark were the storms they had witnessed. But now the heavens wore a threatened aspect, before which their spirits quailed. They clung to each other like frightened children.

But the next moment she had withdrawn from his side. "See, how the very heavens would warn us!" she whispered.

"Nay, Heaven itself would unite us," said Brother Christian, as once more the menacing flash drove her to the shelter of his arm. "Oh, think how brief life is—how sweet might be the present—how doubtful is the future."

"Rather let anything come between us than sin," she pleaded.

"The only sin is, that we should be apart," said Brother Christian.

"But I, too, am vowed," she pleaded, "and God has accepted of my vows, and uses me for the service of His poor."

"And has He one so poor as I?" said Brother Christian.

"Oh, do not tempt me more than I can bear," she urged, with one last appeal. "For me, I would sacrifice God and Paradise—my own soul—everything but thy salvation for thy sake."

"Alas, thou only art left to me from the wreck, in which my faith, my hope, my duty, all are perished!" cried the monk. "Already I am a fallen spirit, abandoned of God and my fellows. Let me not fail of thy love too!"

The tempest seemed to pause to listen for her answer, and before its fury re-awoke they had once more exchanged their vows, the heavenly for the earthly.

V.

LONG years went by. In a cottage embowered in woods and vineyards reaching down to the banks of the lake, some way removed from their native village, yet within the same kindly influences, dwelt Brother Christian and Elise. His monastic habit was dropped, and like other sons of the earth, he laboured for his wife and children. But the twain were now farther apart than when Alps and glaciers kept them asunder. Dread peaks of unbelief and doubt rose forbidding between them and all domestic peace, wide chasms of despair yawned threatening to their view.

Night and day Brother Christian was haunted by vague remorse. Colder than the ice upon the summit of the Alpine Pass lay on his heart the burden of his broken vows. He was perpetually haunted by the vision of travellers perishing in the snow and crying to him for succour.

What was earth, what were the few brief years of mortal life that he should have sacrificed for them not only his own eternal bliss, but hers, who was dearer to him than his soul? For to her, too, this spell of stolen indulgence was bitter. Her eyes continually reproached him.

How sweeter far it had been to live amid the snows of the hospice on the consciousness of sacrifice for the sake of God and her than thus to be together, yet estranged beneath these sunny skies. Oh, why had he yielded to evil, was his continual cry. Life is so brief—and it was almost over! Could he but have endured to the end.

He had snatched at the cup of life's cordial, which God had been reserving for him, sparkling to the brim, for Paradise, and it had become turbid and bitter to the taste. Yea, Christ had been able to turn the water, even the ice-cold water of the mountain torrent, into wine, but the tempter had turned for him the very wine of love and gladness into gall. At one stroke he had risked the loss of love, both human and divine, and heaven and earth were lost to him. A traitor, a deserter, a monk that was no monk, a husband unworthy of the title, a father whose children were a reproach.

For on them, too, the curse had fallen. The fight their father had once fought and lost against temptation seemed to have infused its passion in their blood. Their lives were a series of broken vows, a perpetual warfare against evil which they seemed to be without power to resist, till one by one they passed beyond the reach of his control, and even of his ken. From the seed of Brother Christian's crime, as it seemed to him, had sprung a deadly and perhaps unending growth of misery and sin.

And now Elise lay dying, her heart twice broken through his means. She moaned in her sleep, and he lightly laid his hand on

her forehead. But from his touch, even in her slumbers, she shrank away and shuddered.

"She never shrank from me in my dreams within the ice-bound hospice," thought Brother Christian, "when I lay in my cell worn out with works of charity and prayer, and her image came to brighten my repose. There in the home my heart had made for itself, her smile never failed me."

VI.

BROTHER CHRISTIAN stood alone by the edge of the lake. The sun was sinking fast, and his heart sank with it. The waters murmured drearily in his troubled ear.

As he stood thus, where in dreams he had so often stood before, something in the aspect of the scene, in the scent of the woods behind, recalled to him with a sudden vivid presentment, that was almost like reality, a scene of his childhood—the first kiss he remembered from Elise, following on some childish grief, and which she had offered him as they stood together outside the school-house door.

As if stirred into movement by this recollection, the scenes of his whole life passed in review before him, a long procession of ever-changing dreams, some beautiful as the first faint, fair tinge of golden light upon the valleys, others dark and lurid with shadows of despair.

He saw himself a child playing with another child in the woods and orchards. They filled their hands with wild flowers and chest-nuts. Together they toddled down the green paths to the lake-shore, or, when the sun blazed scorching overhead, sought the shadow of the great cool church. They mingled their play, their prayer, their tears, their laughter, and at last, scarcely yet out of their childhood, they plighted their troth.

Then the aspect of his life changed. The idea of monasticism took possession of his brain, not in its idle contemplative form, but in its diviner character of devotion to God through active service of His children. As other lads feel themselves summoned by voices they cannot resist, to the sea and chase, so to him came that mystic pleading call of withdrawal from earth and consecration to God and his fellows in the old hospice amid the snows. Before the passion of self-sacrifice all other passions gave way, yet not without a piteous revolt on behalf of the hopes whose sweet young blossoms he fancied himself bound to crush.

Long and long did he waver, and deemed that when once his choice was fixed his heart would be at rest. But, instead, his broken will was to writhe in anguish within its self-assumed bonds.

He saw himself in the hospice, the first bright glow of ecstasy, like fire from heaven, keeping him warm amid the chill of the glacial snows. Then that too faded (alas, unsteadfast that he was!) and

flesh and spirit sank amid the rigours of perpetual winter. Fits of stormy regret alternated in his soul with dim trances of adoration, as now heaven, now earth, now God and now Elise obtained supremacy over him; till at last, through the mechanical discharge of his labours alike and of his prayers, vain desire for his native scenes, for the homely occupations of his youth, more than all, for the face of his Elise, slowly wore his heart out.

Then came his temptation, and his fall—his brief taste of trembling, conscience-stricken happiness—his bitter long remorse.

And now Elise lay dying, the assurance of divine favour on which, as on a raft of safety, her soul might have drifted out upon the dark waters of death, overthrown by his hand.

The next moment he was kneeling by her couch, telling her of his repentance, which he would turn to prayers to heaven for their forgiveness, and to atoning deeds of charity.

She smiled upon him, as she had not smiled since they parted long years ago, at the foot of the cross.

"Adieu, Brother Christian! our flowers will bloom for us in Paradise," she said in wistful accents, and pressed his hand upon her heart, as if she would have it beat its last beneath his touch.

VII.

BROTHER CHRISTIAN woke as from a long, bewildered dream. He had wandered many miles from the monastery, no one quite knew upon what mission, or whether in a species of delirium. Then faintness or slumber seemed to have overtaken him, he lay down at the foot of a tree, and his strange dream had come to him. Perhaps in God's mercy, for the earthly tie was loosed in gentler fashion than he could have dared to hope, and he was free to obey the heavenly call once more. But oh! with what a different heart from before!

How humbly his feet set forward on their returning path.

If there was no forgiveness for him with man, he knew that his broken spirit would be accepted of God.

On he journeyed, but the beaten paths seemed always to elude him. He was now blinded with freshly falling snow, now dazzled by the glare of the sun, now groping in thick fog which anon lifted without a warning, leaving only to the far dim reaches of his vision ethereal sapphire mists on the upper reaches of the ascent, which went winding upward from cliff to cliff like a pathway up to heaven.

Spectre figures seemed to move amongst the mountains. The mountains themselves seemed to shake and swim around him.

His sight failed, his senses reeled, the chill of the glacier made him faint even while, from the labour of his ascent, the perspiration streamed from his forehead.

Sweet chimes ever and again tolled solemnly in his ears. Was it the vesper-bell calling him to worship among his brethren in the old convent chapel? Was it the shepherd's call to prayer?

Before he knew it, it was evening. The white waste world grew wan and shadowy. Daylight died, and the bleak landscape seemed to swim from his gaze. Pale and wan grew the icy peaks around. The frost-hewn glacier took on weird shapes, and seemed to move along before him in grotesque procession in which monks, pilgrims, nuns, and bands of the sheeted dead took part.



He watched the moving figures as if fascinated. But the frost lay heavy on his eyelids, he ached in every limb, and ever and again came that subduing faintness over him. While still to the hospice his fading senses clung—ever before him appeared to rise its venerable, rough-hewn walls, ever in his ears to ring the kindly call of the Angelus.

Once he passed a peasant lying exhausted on the snow, and gave him wine out of his calabash, vaguely wondering the while how he came to be in monk's garb still, and to have the implements of his former ministry about him.

With increasing difficulty every step was taken. He lay down,

intending to rest for one moment, and closed his eyes. Thus lying, amid ice and snow, he felt nearer to God than he had ever done when chanting His praises in the monastery chapel; nor was conscious of any wrong to God in that the image of Elise too was with him, like a flower in the snow. The claims of divine and human love no longer conflicted within him.

At last he felt at peace with both earth and heaven. It was as if he had been baptised anew. His soul had come back to him like the soul of a little child.

When he opened his eyes again the white world shone transfigured. It was as if a rainbow had lost its arch and diffused its colours over sky and Alps. All the varying hues of earth, of her spring blossoms, her summer bloom, her golden harvests were reflected on these barren heights.

Brother Christian lay gazing up into the face of the illumined skies as peacefully as a child on its mother's lap looks up into the heaven of her face.

VIII.

THE whole fraternity turned out with pickaxes and torches to look for Brother Christian, who had been missing since matins, no one thinking but that he was engaged in some duty belonging to his office; while the Prior secretly wondered how one so gentle should have committed such a breach of discipline as to absent himself so many hours without permission, and was troubled lest he should have to enjoin some trifling penance.

It was a peasant on his way to the other side that gave the alarm. He, himself, had lain exhausted, he said, from cold and hunger in the snow, and the monk had revived him with the last drop of wine in his calabash, as well as with sweet words of cheer.

"Alas!" said the man, "he saved my life, but I fear lest his own may have been sacrificed. For he went stumbling at every step, and it was as if every step would be his last, so spent and feeble he appeared."

"I have observed his strange absent mood for days past," said Brother Hugo. "In the chapel, in the refectory, round the hearth, at recreation, whether he sat apart or mingled with the others, it was as if his body were here without his soul."

"Ah, indeed," said the Prior, "I have marked it. A faithful, simple soul, with not a thought but for God and heaven. The fire of his devotion, I fear me, has been burning his life out."

When they started the early fallen night lay heavy all around them, the pale reflection of the snow serving barely to relieve the dead monotony of darkness. But a faint glimmer which, for the past few minutes, had been struggling with the gloom of the skies suddenly broke out, revealing the clear, chill splendour of a young moon. It

made the coldness visible, and the monks shivered as well for themselves as for the thought of their comrade perishing or perished in the snow.

It glimmered with a dull lustre on the surface of a little lake at the foot of the hospice. The eager barking of a dog drew them to the spot, and there it was, by its black frozen sheet, that Brother Christian lay.

A smile mingled strangely on his countenance with the white moonbeam, and a little red blossom was clasped in his hand.

The presence of death seemed to add a coldness to the scene.

One of the monks stooped and laid his hand on Brother Christian's heart.

"Alas!" he cried, with a burst of childlike grief. "It beats no more."

"Weep not, Anselm," said the Prior, regarding the quiet sleeper with a half-envious look. "At least Brother Christian has died happy."

P. W. ROOSE.

A YEAR AGO.

WHY has it died so soon, our happy love?

We fell a-dreaming 'midst the spring's first flowers,
'Midst note of throstle, and of nesting dove,
And all the freshness of young April bowers.

'Twas but a year ago, but one brief year,
With storms of March the violet is wet,
And 'neath our feet the brown leaves rustle sear,
Which budded o'er our heads when first we met.

Why should so fair a thing know life so brief?
Why should we twain awake to find it dead?
That happy love which sprang with blade and leaf,
And faded ere the blossom-time was fled.

A year ago—Time does its work so fast—
How calmly we are parting, you and I,
With only mem'ries of that brief sweet past,
To touch with tenderness our last "Good-bye."

HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.

LADY CECILIA'S EMERALDS

CHAPTER IV.

"I SHALL have to tell Ronald soon!"

Lady Cecilia spoke with a vexation which showed how extremely repugnant this idea was to her mind. Two days had gone by since the discovery of her loss, and the mystery seemed further than ever from solution. When all search in the house proved fruitless, she had sent information to a private detective office in London, but with an injunction that for the present the matter should be kept as quiet as possible.

On the following day just as Lady Cecilia had given vent to the above exclamation, she was summoned to receive one of the heads of the detective firm. She found awaiting her a quiet and gentleman-like man, whose straightforward bearing soon commanded respect and confidence. Mr. Weston was already in possession of the main facts of the case.

"Your servants," he said presently, "have all been long in your employ, I believe."

"Not one of them for less than ten years, and several for nearer twenty."

"Then I think we may discard that factor from the problem for the present. What about the young lady to whose care you confided the jewels?"

"Miss Marsdale has lived with me nearly three years now; she is a lady by birth and education, and I will answer for her innocence as confidently as if she were my own daughter."

Mr. Weston slightly shook his head.

"Unfortunately it sometimes proves true that neither birth nor education will enable a woman to withstand temptation under strong pressure of circumstances. Still, I am reluctant to suggest that a young lady in whom you place such strong confidence would so betray it. There remains the possibility of some outsider having got wind of the fact that the emeralds were in Miss Marsdale's care, and have burglariously entered the house and abstracted them."

"There is not the slightest trace of such an entrance having been effected. Besides, would not a burglar have taken the whole contents of the drawer? It contained several articles of value belonging to Miss Marsdale, and not one of them is missing."

Mr. Weston sat silent for a minute, while Lady Cecilia anxiously watched his thoughtful face. To her the loss of the stones was in itself no great disaster; the sting of the loss lay in the fact that they were heir-

looms, and that therefore it would be impossible for her to conceal the fact from her brother. Lord Merton was the last man in the world to sit down quietly under such a loss, or to consider the feelings of any person concerned in his determination to bring the offender to justice.

"Has Miss Marsdale ever been given to sleep-walking, I wonder?" said the detective presently.

"Never, so far as she or any of us know."

"Was she so specially worried or anxious about the valuable deposit committed to her care, as to make it likely she would walk in her sleep?"

"She assures me, that after securely locking the case in the drawer, she scarcely gave a second thought to the matter. We are all like one family in the house, and in this quiet part of the world burglary is a thing almost unheard of."

"Will you allow me to question the young lady in your presence?"

"Certainly!" Lady Cecilia rang and sent a message. "But I must beg you to spare her as far as possible; she is terribly upset; nothing I can say comforts her, though it is difficult to see for what she is to blame herself."

"It would be impossible to deny that Miss Marsdale's position is a very unpleasant one. Appearances are strongly against her; but I hope with your assistance to prove her free from all blame in the affair."

When Phœbe entered the room, Lady Cecilia was shocked to notice how much the three days' anxiety had already told upon her health. She looked pale and worn, but the quiet, sympathetic manner in which the detective put his preliminary inquiries soon set her more at her ease than on her first entrance.

"Did you remain here all the time of Lady Cecilia Merton's absence, Miss Marsdale?"

"I was not absent for a single night."

After a momentary hesitation the girl added—"I was away for the greater part of one day."

"You do not mean away from Merton altogether, my dear?" interposed her friend. "You mean you were detained in the village all day?"

"No, Lady Cecilia." The pale face grew suddenly crimson. "I went to London one day."

"You never told me of that! How was it?"

Phœbe reflected a moment. How far was she now bound by the promise of secrecy she had given to her brother? She used her clear common-sense, and decided as she knew he would have done for her. She would say as little as possible, but she would not complicate matters by unwise reticence.

"I went to London, Lady Cecilia, on private business for my

brother—he is in Montreal, Mr. Weston—and he requested me not to mention the matter even to you.”

The faces of the listeners grew graver. Mr. Weston was the first to speak.

“I am afraid, Miss Marsdale, we must ask you, for your own sake, to disregard that injunction now. Your brother would surely be the last person to wish you to compromise your good name by silence on so vital a point. If you will confide to us the object of your journey, you may rely upon our honour to keep it secret, should it prove to have no bearing on the case.”

The tears rolled up into Phœbe's eyes, but with a brave effort she mastered her emotion.

“I went to London to dispose of a watch and chain belonging to my brother. He had urgent need of money, and asked me to send it by the next mail.”

“What was the amount he required?”

“Fifty pounds.”

“For what purpose did he require it so suddenly?”

“That I am not at liberty to tell you,” replied the girl with decision. “I think it is sufficient—to say that he had urgent need for the money, and that I sent it to him.”

“We will not press you on that point,” said the detective kindly. “That you should have had such a task imposed upon you, and that the injunction to secrecy should have been given, are sufficient indications that your brother was in some difficulty which would not redound to his credit if known. I don't want to hurt your feelings, Miss Marsdale,” he added, as he marked the hot flush on his hearer's cheek, “but we cannot afford to mince matters now. I dare not disguise from you that your position is a difficult one, and that this London journey certainly complicates matters. Absolute frankness is your only safeguard. Have you your brother's letter still?”

“No; I destroyed it at once, for fear it should ever fall into hands for which it was not intended.”

“Then you see we have no legal evidence that it was not five hundred pounds he required instead of fifty. How did you send the money?”

“In Bank of England notes in a registered letter—five ten-pound notes.”

“Or it *might* have been five hundred-pound notes. Don't think I am making out a case against you, Miss Marsdale. I only wish to show you the pitfalls which lie in your way, in order the better to help you to avoid them.”

There was the ring of sincere sympathy in his voice. Mr. Weston, a keen physiognomist, whom long experience had endowed with much confidence in his own discernment, had made up his mind as to Phœbe's innocence within five minutes of his introduction to her.

“Did you dispose of the watch without difficulty?” he asked next.

"Not very easily. My brother told me to try several places before accepting less than fifty pounds, and I had to visit several jewellers' shops before I found one willing to purchase them at that price."

"To whom did you finally dispose of them?"

"To a Mr. Barton of Morley Street."

"A well-known man of excellent character. That is good. He will of course be able to testify that you offered him nothing but the watch and its appendages. What time of day was it when you concluded your transaction with Mr. Barton?"

"Half-past three, I suppose; or it may have been four o'clock."

"And your return train?"

"There was no train till the 6.30."

"What did you do in the interval?"

"I went into the Park."

"And took a chair by the ring, I suppose?"

"No. I walked and sat in a quiet part by the Serpentine."

"Was not that rather an unusual proceeding for a young lady from the country, who would naturally be interested in seeing the gay world enjoying its afternoon airing?"

Phœbe smiled faintly.

"My errand had not been so pleasant as greatly to dispose me for sightseeing. Besides"—she looked at her friend in a silent appeal for forgiveness—"I feared I might perhaps be seen there by some one who would know me, and wonder at my being in town."

"I understand." Mr. Weston considerably averted his eyes from the girl's downcast face. "Still, it is unfortunate. It would be a good thing now if some one *had* seen and recognised you during those two hours."

She looked at him with a white, set countenance which moved his pity more than he cared to show.

"I wish, Mr. Weston, you would be kind enough to explain to me exactly what charge will be brought against me?"

"No charge will be brought against you, Phœbe," hastily interposed Lady Cecilia. "I will take care of that. No one can move in the matter if I refuse to do so."

She spoke boldly, but her heart quaked with an inward dread that after all Lord Merton might prove to have a legal voice in the matter.

"Dear Lady Cecilia, will it not be better for me to know exactly what will be said about it by people who have not such faith in me as you have?"

"Miss Marsdale is right," pronounced the detective. "Forewarned is forearmed." He turned to Phœbe with a kind of smile. "Well, Miss Marsdale, were I as convinced of your guilt as I sincerely am of your innocence, this is how I should make out the case against you. Here is a mysterious robbery committed, and in the same person we find united both an apparent motive for the crime, and the opportunity to commit it. A young lady has urgent need of money to help her

brother (to whom she is evidently much attached) out of some serious difficulty. The same young lady is the custodian of the missing jewels. Unknown to her friends, she makes a hurried journey to town, visits various jewellers' establishments, disposes of certain articles of value, and then spends two hours more in London, of which two hours we have no account but her own. By the way, did you take a cab to the Park?"

"No. I dismissed my cab in Morley Street, and went there by omnibus."

"Unlucky again! A cab we might possibly have traced; an omnibus is hopeless. You see the natural inference in the absence of any other solution of the mystery, is that during those two hours the stones were disposed of to some unscrupulous dealer, and the proceeds forwarded to Canada."

"But would not a person capable of planning such a thing as that have contrived some scheme for diverting suspicion from herself?—some pretence at burglary, perhaps?"

"That is certainly one of the strong points in the defence."

"And your answer to it?"

"Simply that we have many cases on record where women of previously spotless character have been so carried away by the overpowering pressure of immediate need, as utterly to ignore the probability, or even certainty of detection."

"But then they would confess their crime when charged with it!"

"Not so. Once the immediate pressure is removed, the instinct of self-preservation awakes again; they understand clearly the disgrace and danger attendant upon detection, and strive by the most persistent denial to avert discovery."

The case had been laid before her so quietly and dispassionately, that Phœbe had well-nigh forgotten that she was not merely discussing an abstract problem. She awoke to remembrance with a start of pain.

"Thank you," she said in a strained voice. "I see my position plainly now, Mr. Weston. Dear Lady Cecilia, how am I to live this down? And oh, if Rupert should ever know of it!"

"He never shall know of it, my dear. I refuse to move another step in the matter if it is only to bring misery upon you. And if Merton tries to interfere, I shall pay over to him for his daughter's benefit the utmost value of the stones, and then he cannot, in common decency, make any more fuss about the wretched gew-gaws."

"We must not forget that there is another side to the question," remarked the detective. "As long as the mystery remains unsolved, so long a certain amount of suspicion will always remain attached to the last person who had charge of the jewels. For Miss Marsdale's sake, every effort should be made to solve the riddle."

Lady Cecilia sighed wearily.

"I suppose so. Well, Mr. Weston, I leave the whole thing in your

hands. Do what you think best ; only keep it as quiet as possible. There must be no scandalous paragraphs in the society papers, nor policemen turning the place topsy-turvy."

Mr. Weston bowed. "I think I can promise you that the investigation shall be so conducted as to cause you the least possible annoyance. Miss Marsdale remains here with you, I conclude?"

"Certainly," replied the lady addressed, with decision. The detective looked inquiringly at Phoebe.

"I shall remain here, Mr. Weston, as long as Lady Cecilia continues convinced of my innocence. If I find that appearances are too strongly against me for even her faith in me to resist them, I shall ask her permission to depart, and wait for time to clear my name. Of course I should always keep her acquainted with my whereabouts."

"Miss Marsdale has known me barely three years as yet," observed Lady Cecilia with a rather grim smile. "She does not realise that she has to do with one of the most obstinate women in all Christendom."

A few farewell words, and Mr. Weston took his leave. Lady Cecilia turned to her companion with authoritative cheerfulness.

"Now, Phoebe, not another word to-day about those miserable green abominations! To think of their bringing all this trouble upon us! I blame myself more than I can say for my stupid carelessness in leaving them to you to put away. It is all my own fault, and your poor pale face is my punishment."

As Lady Cecilia spoke, she took the girl, for the first time, into her motherly arms, and there Phoebe relieved her overburdened heart by a brief indulgence in quiet tears ere she roused herself to resume the usual routine of their daily life.

CHAPTER V.

ONCE again Lady Cecilia and Phoebe were sitting together at breakfast. They had not yet abandoned the summer-parlour for that meal ; but the change without the window was scarcely greater than that within. A November mist hung low over the sodden lawns and empty beds : a cold and sunless sky, with never a break in its grey expanse, brought the horizon to its narrowest limits. A few leaves still shivered on the dripping trees, though the ground beneath was buried under their fallen and decaying brethren. Every now and then a petulant gust of colder air, scarcely worthy the name of wind, left a bare bough still barer, as the wet leaves sank slowly and shudderingly to the wetter earth.

Phoebe Marsdale's pale face took a yet more sorrowful cast as she saw her companion push away, with a worried action, an open letter

in Lord Merton's familiar handwriting. More than one recent visit from the head of the house had shown Phœbe that in him she had to do with an all but declared enemy. Once and again she had been examined and cross-examined by him as to every detail connected with the loss of the gems with an animus which plainly showed that he regarded his sister as an easily duped and grossly deceived woman, whose misplaced confidence would presently lead her into still more serious trouble. Scarcely a week passed now without the arrival of a lengthy epistle from him, which brought a shadow to Lady Cecilia's face for the rest of the day. This particular morning, Phœbe had resolved to broach a matter which had for weeks been weighing heavily on her heart; and with the courage of desperation, she plunged into it without the slightest preamble.

"Lady Cecilia, have you written anything about my trouble to Mr. Lee?"

The rector had started for an autumn tour just about the time of the discovery respecting the necklace.

"No, Phœbe, I have not."

There was a slight hesitation in the reply, which at once caught the girl's ear.

"You agree with me, however, that he ought to be told?" she said quickly.

Her friend looked troubled, and evaded the question.

"Why do you bring up the question so suddenly?"

"Because I met Mr. Lee yesterday in the village, for the first time since he came home."

Lady Cecilia summoned up a smile.

"Not a very cogent reason, that, Phœbe!"

"Please don't, dear Lady Cecilia! It seems to me that I shall never be able to laugh again until we know the truth about that dreadful necklace. You know what I mean. He walked with me as far as the gates, and—well, if I had not deliberately stopped him, he would have spoken plainly. He had begun, but I told him I particularly wished him to see you again before he said more."

"And what did he reply?"

"He seemed a good deal surprised, and asked when he should be likely to find you at home. I said I thought you would see him this morning. You will do this for me, will you not? I *cannot* tell him about it all myself, and yet, he ought not to be allowed to offer his hand to any woman 'under a cloud'—and no girl could wish for a better test of a man's real worth!" added Phœbe proudly.

"There you are certainly right. Well, Phœbe, I will do as you wish; if the man comes this morning, I will explain to him exactly how the thing stands; and then we shall see what sort of stuff he is made of. You are better out of the way, child. Take the ponies and drive over to Corby; I want a few things there, and the little scamps need exercise. They will be pretty fresh this morning, and

keep your thoughts from dwelling too much on what is going on here."

It was already raining a little, but Phoebe, accustomed to be out in all weathers, gladly acquiesced in the suggestion. Anything to be out of the way of Leighton Lee that morning.

* * * * *

If any nervousness lurked under the young clergyman's debonnair greeting when shown about noon into Lady Cecilia's private room, it was certainly well disguised. As to the ultimate result of the interview, he felt no real anxiety. He had already made up his mind that it was a mere formality, due to some over-scrupulousness on the part of his lady-love, for he had as yet heard nothing of the gossip which, in spite of all precautions, the neighbourhood was already beginning to associate with her name. Almost his first words, however, gave Lady Cecilia the opening she wanted.

"I was sorry to see yesterday," he remarked, in a properly sympathetic tone, "that Miss Marsdale was looking far from well. I hope she is not seriously out of health?"

Even as he spoke, there flashed into his mind the memory-picture of a house he had lately entered, the disorderly home of a brother incumbent, whose sickly wife was entirely incapacitated from directing the affairs of her household. Phoebe had always looked to him the picture of perfect health.

"Miss Marsdale, I regret to say, is far from well, Mr. Lee; but her trouble is more mental than bodily."

The gravity of his companion's tone at once arrested the young man's wandering thoughts.

"You surprise me greatly, Lady Cecilia! I should have thought Miss Marsdale too securely sheltered here with you for any such serious trouble to reach her."

Was it possible that Phoebe had been fretting herself ill over the cautiousness of his own slow advances? The idea brought with it a glow of satisfaction; but no; in that case she would certainly not have stopped him so peremptorily the day before.

"On the contrary, Mr. Lee, it is I who, by my own carelessness have brought all the trouble upon her. You have heard of the loss of my emeralds?"

The rector looked at her with sincere astonishment.

"I have heard nothing of any loss; you know I only reached home the night before last."

Then Lady Cecilia concisely but clearly related the whole story.

"You quite understand, Mr. Lee," she said in conclusion, "that I, myself, am as *fully* persuaded of Miss Marsdale's innocence as of my own? And Mr. Weston, who has attained considerable eminence in his profession, entirely concurs in my opinion. But I feel bound to tell you that one of his colleagues, to whom he confided the particulars, is equally convinced to the contrary."

Leighton Lee sat for a minute apparently lost in reflection.

"May I ask what opinion Lord Merton has formed?" he said presently. Lady Cecilia's brow clouded.

"I am sorry to say that my brother and I do not agree on the point."

"And we must confess that Lord Merton is a clear-headed business man, of wide experience, to whose opinion great weight will be attached." The rector spoke as if thinking aloud.

"His experience seems to stand him in poor stead in this matter," said the lady a little scornfully.

Again there was a brief silence. The young rector gazed steadily into the hat he still held, while his companion played nervously with an ivory paper-cutter. At last he spoke.

"I cannot help seeing," he said slowly, "that the view of the case adopted by such a man as Lord Merton is likely to be the view taken by the majority of those who learn the facts."

"Majority!—Majorities are the result produced by multiplying one fool by many fools!"

"Still, in this world, it is scarcely possible for a man to ignore them."

"It would be possible for some men, Mr. Lee, though not, I fear, for you."

Lady Cecilia's temper was rising fast, but her companion replied with unmoved politeness:

"You are quite right, Lady Cecilia;—may I add, as usual? I am not one of those men who could trample public opinion under foot in such a matter. The woman whom I take as my wife must be above suspicion; no slightest breath of slander must ever have sullied the spotlessness of her good name!"

"Not even a slander so cruelly unfounded, so unmerited, as this, Mr. Lee?"

"That it is unmerited, we—those of us who know Miss Marsdale well—must feel perfectly sure; but we can scarcely call it unfounded, Lady Cecilia. We must confess that appearances—deceitful appearances, beyond a doubt—are only too strongly in favour of Lord Merton's view of the case. And under those circumstances——"

"Say no more, Mr. Lee, I beg," interrupted his hostess, in a tone that was dangerously cold and calm. "Say no more, for the honour of your manhood. At least *one* benefit will result to Miss Marsdale from this sharp suffering;—she will have learnt to gauge accurately the value of the regard you profess for her."

Her hearer coloured slightly.

"I am afraid you do not quite appreciate the difficulties of my position, Lady Cecilia. I have not only myself and my own future to consider: my father has not only given me in the past every advantage in his power, but still allows me a handsome addition to the income derived from my benefice, an addition without which I most certainly

could not afford to marry a young lady possessing no fortune of her own. This sad business could not, with propriety, be kept from my father's knowledge, and I know perfectly well what his verdict would be."

Lady Cecilia shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"Pray, spare us both the pain of further explanation, Mr. Lee. Remember, 'Qui s'excuse, s'accuse'!"

But the rector had determined not to take offence.

"I am sorry you view the matter in that light, Lady Cecilia. But I must ask you nevertheless to hear me patiently. My self-respect demands that I should put clearly before you my reasons for withdrawing—for the *present*—my pretensions as a suitor for Miss Marsdale's hand."

His hearer's lips took an ominous curl as the rector spoke of his self-respect.

"Besides my position as a son," went on the young man, "I am bound also to consider the demands of my sacred office. As the rector of this parish, how could I inculcate upon my people strict attention to the moral precepts, while I, myself, passed over, as of no moment, so grave and well-substantiated a charge against my affianced wife? It is vain to hope the matter can have been kept secret; your servants will have spread it abroad, in spite of all injunctions to the contrary."

Lady Cecilia threw down her paper-cutter as though it had burnt her.

"It is not worth my while to answer you, Mr. Lee! Thank God, Miss Marsdale has in me a truer friend and a better protector than she could ever have found in so scrupulously cautious and prudent a gentleman"—there was the faintest possible accent laid on the word—"as you have shown yourself. I congratulate you, Mr. Lee, on the easy mastery you maintain over, what I suppose you would call, your affections!"

"Again you do me injustice, Lady Cecilia."

The young rector rose to his feet, and drew himself to the full height of his tall figure, looking so handsome in his honest appreciation of his own rectitude, that Lady Cecilia's eyes rested upon him in admiration.

"Had I been already pledged to Miss Marsdale," he went on, "I should have felt it my duty to stand by her in this most unpleasant business at all costs. My word would have been my bond, as much as if the bluest blood in the kingdom flowed in my veins!"

He had not failed to mark the half-involuntary emphasis. It was the first time his companion had ever heard him allude to his parentage.

"But I cannot help seeing that Providence has mercifully saved me from great suffering by enabling me to restrain my natural impatience in this matter. Believe me, Lady Cecilia,"—he spoke with

great earnestness—"I shall most anxiously await a favourable conclusion to this painful uncertainty. And should the course of events ere long enable Miss Marsdale to prove her innocence to the world, most joyfully I shall hasten once more to place my happiness at her disposal. Till then, you yourself, in a calmer moment, will, I am sure, agree with me that the matter had better be left in abeyance."

Leighton Lee was a gifted and practised orator, and as he concluded his well-rounded period, his full and exquisitely modulated tones so forcibly recalled the close of one of his own sermons that involuntarily Lady Cecilia Merton rose to her feet, half expecting to hear the familiar "And now."

But the next moment she remembered, with unholy joy, that the speaker was not now entrenched in the safe vantage-ground of the pulpit, but stood before her a mere defenceless mortal, upon whom she was free to wreak her vengeance at will. At the thought her face suddenly cleared, and her voice softened.

"I am really obliged to you, Mr. Lee," she said sweetly, "for this most clear and explicit statement. There is nothing like plain speaking in any little difficulty, is there? There are just one or two points which require a little elucidation."

The rector bowed.

"I observe you stipulate that the course of events shall clear Miss Marsdale's name ere long. Would you mind telling me *how* long you propose to wait before transferring your affections to a less compromising quarter?"

Leighton Lee felt puzzled. Was the woman laughing at him or not? Her tones were perfectly serious, and her face expressed nothing but simple anxiety to serve the cause of her young friend. He decided to ignore the possibility of sarcasm.

"That is a difficult and a painful question," he said gravely. "My attachment to Miss Marsdale is now of considerable standing, and it will need no small effort on my part to overcome it."

"Say rather to *postpone* it, Mr. Lee," interposed the lady, her eyes meeting his so frankly and pleasantly that the thought of treachery seemed too monstrous to be entertained. Her victim continued:

"At the same time, I cannot disguise from myself the fact that it is *highly* expedient—if not imperatively necessary—for me to marry within no great period of time. An unmarried benefited clergyman, Lady Cecilia, stands at an immense disadvantage."

"Indeed! I had always imagined the position, in many respects, an enviable one! Rumour credits you with an almost incredible number of invitations, Mr. Lee."

"That is one of the disadvantages to which I allude," gravely replied the young rector. "I assure you, the *utmost* circumspection can scarcely avail to guard a man in my position from misconstruction."

"That must really be very embarrassing!" His hostess's tone had

grown so sympathetic, that Leighton Lee began to recover his usual excellent spirits.

"It is so indeed! And then a bachelor's housekeeping? have you any idea of the miseries of such an establishment, Lady Cecilia? One month my housekeeper ruins me by extravagance, and then if I presume to drop but the smallest insinuation as to the amounts of the butcher's and baker's bills, why, I pay the penalty of a whole month's starvation!"

Lady Cecilia laughed.

"But you have not yet answered my question, Mr. Lee."

Her hearer's face grew becomingly grave again.

"I only wanted to show you what good reason I had for not leaving the matter open *indefinitely*. I think, however, I may say that I shall await the issue of events for—shall we say twelve months? If by the end of that time nothing should have come to light clearing Miss Marsdale's name from this terribly unfortunate imputation, I should be reluctantly compelled to abandon all hope of a union with her, however painful such a course would inevitably be to me."

"And you would turn your attention elsewhere?"

"Naturally so."

"But if in the course of—shall we say eleven months and a fortnight?—Miss Marsdale's innocence shall be clearly established, she may confidently reckon upon your affections being still at her disposal?"

What on earth *did* the woman mean? Leighton Lee answered with just a touch of asperity in his voice:

"I have already said, that if within a year this mystery should be satisfactorily solved, I shall receive the tidings with the utmost joy."

Then the storm broke, and the wrath and scorn pent up in Lady Cecilia's faithful heart found sudden vent. Her eyes flashed, and her voice shook with indignation as she turned full upon her astounded spiritual pastor and master.

"And you flatter yourself that *she* would receive you with corresponding joy, I suppose? You actually imagine that such a girl as Phoebe Marsdale would stoop to marry a man—I had all but said, a thing!—who, in her hour of trouble and trial, deliberately abandons her to the cold mercy of a censorious world! A man with whom the fear of a little village tittle-tattle outweighs all thought of her whole life's happiness! Whose one thought throughout the whole affair has evidently been his own social advancement, his one dread, the fear that a little of the mud cast at her might perchance sully his own spotless garments!"

She paused for breath, but before her astounded rector could speak, the torrent was again upon him.

"And the worst part of it all is, that you don't and can't see yourself for what you are, you poor, pitiful mockery of a man! Good heavens! how came so poor a creature ever to lift his eyes to my

large-hearted, loyal Phœbe? Why, man! have you no tiniest spark of chivalry in all that big, handsome body of yours? Be comforted, Mr. Lee! Providence has indeed taken care of you both! and my emeralds have not been lost in vain. A tortoise mated with an eagle would not be more uncomfortable than such a man as you with a woman like Phœbe Marsdale!"

But Leighton had now had time to recover himself; he stood before Lady Cecilia, hat in hand, pale, but calmly dignified.

"I think this interview had better end, Lady Cecilia. Your zeal for your friend is carrying you beyond the limits which your calmer hours will approve. Allow me to take my leave for the present."

He held out his hand with grave politeness. Lady Cecilia fairly stamped with vexation.

"Will *nothing* disturb your serene self-complacency, and show you your conduct in its true light?"

"Excuse me if I remind you that I must be the best judge of my own conduct in so purely personal a matter. Good-morning, Lady Cecilia."

And with a courteous bow, Leighton Lee took his departure.

(To be continued.)



HOLYROOD.

FAIR scene of many memories, sad and gay,
The saddest and the gayest that have been;
To her still sacred, frail and fairest queen,
Whose presence seems to grace thy halls to-day
As in the royal summers passed away,
When but her beauty, not her sin, was seen.
Her history, written here on wall and screen,
Lives with the ages and as long as they;
But time is generous, and we now recall
Her goodness only, not her guiltiness,
Her all-prevailing beauty, not her fall;
And some who might have blamed her yet may bless
A memory that has suffered more than all,
A name that charms the world to tenderness.

GEORGE COTTERELL.

THE ROMANCE OF SPAIN.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "MEMORIALS OF
MRS. HENRY WOOD," ETC., ETC.



SEGOVIA.

AS the magic hours passed in Segovia, we still felt in a dream, and almost wished it a dream from which we might never awaken. In all our wanderings we had met nothing to equal these wonders.

True, we had not here the Golden Horn of Constantinople; the splendid Mosques of Cairo, or the refined and exquisite tombs of the Caliphs. We had no burning mountain throwing its shadow upon the blue waters of a matchless bay, whilst the eye follows the coast-line until it rests upon distant Sorrento with its hanging gardens and terraced walks, and the hazy outlines of Capri with its rock-bound shores

and quaint inhabitants. We had no vast ruins of Pompeii to recall a world of nearly 2000 years ago, when people laughed and danced and talked and sang as they do now; when men had their wine-parties and their intrigues, and women arrayed themselves in silks and jewels; and SALVE met the visitor's eye as he passed over the threshold into a room frescoed with the Dancing Hours. We had no far-reaching ocean to remind us that after Time comes Eternity; no sound of restless waves dashing against the rocks, to fall back upon themselves in a rage that is never satisfied and a roar that never ceases.

Nothing of all this.

But comparisons did not even suggest themselves as we looked upon matchless Segovia, for we felt that in its way it had no earthly rival. Every passing hour impressed this more surely upon us. If we turned to the town itself it was full of marvels; if we gazed from the rocky heights upon its surroundings, we only felt the more amazed; if we contemplated its time-honoured battlemented walls, we declared we had seen none like unto them. The streets were an assemblage and succession of wonderful outlines. They were hilly and irregular, after the manner of towns built upon an eminence. They were narrow, as the streets of towns where the sun for many months of the year sends down his scorching rays upon roof and pavement. But those streets of Segovia had no pavement at all. Small, hard stones difficult to walk upon kept up an impression of antiquity which perhaps was the only remnant of the past we objected to.

Exquisite old casements adorned many of the houses, adding to the eastern influence of which we were so often reminded. They caught the eye with their charm as it wandered down the narrowing perspective of every thoroughfare. Here and there round arches crossed the streets in splendid outlines. Occasionally, a lovely vista beyond was framed in: an arch of blue sky against which at an open window the radiant face of a Segovian maiden looked down questioningly at the wanderers lost in amazement and delight; whilst beyond this uprose, sharply pencilled, a Moresque or Mediaeval tower. It was all strangely rare and beautiful, and the streets were full of such scenes.

A few of the houses had interesting courtyards, but these are not the strong point of Segovia. And for that matter Palma de Mallorca—lovely, romantic Palma—had for ever spoilt us in this respect; its crowd of matchless patios with their Moorish remains, their Gothic and Romanesque pillars and arches, their ancient walls decorated with wrought ironwork—all worth a King's ransom—dwelling for ever in the memory.

Some of the houses of Segovia had been palaces centuries ago, and raised their black and frowning walls to the skies. These were built of hard heavy stone, looking as though they had lived for 2000 years and meant to live 2000 years more. Heavy gratings barred the windows, against which a prisoner might beat in vain: there was no Samson at hand to dislodge them.

One of these houses was ornamented with immense diamond-faced stones projecting here and there upon its surface. It was Florentine in character, but we could not learn its history. We only gathered that it was called the Casa de los Picos, which threw no light upon the subject. Not far off was another interesting house in which Juan Bravo, one of the five chiefs of the Comuneros, was said to have been executed in 1512. But another tradition declares that he was executed in the village of Villalar, with those other brave leaders

Padilla and Maldonado. One thing is certain: that he stood upon the walls of Segovia, defending the town, one of its long-suffering inhabitants.

Near this was another house, large and square, dark and gloomy, to which an interest attaches that may be human, but is not romantic. It is one of the few prisons in Spain exclusively devoted to women. Its windows are closely barred; and behind those bars no frightened and feminine face is ever seen. If it were seen, perhaps defiance more than fear would be its expression, since it is said that a bad woman is difficult to bring to repentance. This is not impossible, since the fall must be great.

No sound ever penetrates from within the house: neither penitent prayer nor hardened retort. It gave one a strange feeling, this prison, where women pass their days in captivity, in a part of the town most crowded with life and freedom. The great gates are never opened excepting to admit a fresh arrival of prisoners, or to discharge others whose penance is over. Some are there for life: and for them day and night and summer and winter can bring no hope of change.

We did not enter, or ask to do so, though admission is possible. But what pleasure to gaze on misery you cannot lessen, or faces on which crime has stamped its mark? Not such an impression would we carry away of Segovia, where humanity should correspond with all that is so beautiful and perfect in art and nature. Rather we turned our faces the other way, to meet one of the most enchanting views even in fair Segovia, where enchantment abounds.

This was the church of San Martin, standing, like the prison, in the very midst of the town, houses and people and the bustle of life conspicuous on all sides. From many quarters its tower with its small pointed roof and pinnacle may be seen rising in outline.

But perhaps the tower nearest perfection was that of San Esteban, consisting of five storeys or arcades, with exquisite windows, blind or open, some with the pointed, others with the Romanesque arch. This is one of the eighteen churches of Segovia possessing distinct Romanesque traces. Many other steeples have the same curious arrangement of the rounded angle, with a shaft ending in a sculptured capital delicately inserted into the slant; an unusual detail giving singular grace and finish to the tower. The outline against the background of sky was soft and clear, without sharpness; reminding one—if such a comparison is possible—of those pictures of Kneller, whose rounded outlines are so distinctly separated from their dark background, yet have none of the hardness of the Dutch or later English schools.

The roof crowning this tower, with its little dormer windows, above which rose a heavy moulding ending in a small turret or spire, was an excellent termination, though not so architecturally perfect.

The most remarkable feature of San Martin was a small, exquisite



SAN MARTIN, SEGOVIA.

cloister attached to the south-west walls of the nave. This ran from the steeple and crossed at the west end: a gem of the rarest description. The Romanesque arcades were refined and beautiful, corresponding with the arcades of the tower, but somewhat more ornamented.

Uprising as it were in the centre of a crowded thoroughfare, it formed a startling contrast to its surroundings. When we first saw it, thrown into strong light and shadow by the sun, half the arcades were white and dazzling, the other half in semi-obscurity. Charming were the long-drawn reflections of rounded arch and fluted pillar traced upon the inner walls and pavement, above which rose the tiled and slanting roof. Some of the arcades had been restored, but so well done that one had to look attentively to mark the comparatively new from the old.

Segovia is rich in such churches; but the examples in Spain are not numerous. Las Huelgas at Burgos was of the same character: that wonderful convent once presided over by a Princess Palatine, who dispensed life and death at will: where we saw the nuns at their devotions, flitting from stall to nave, moving noiselessly over the reflecting pavement, and gliding beyond the screen like graceful phantoms into an unseen world: passing "in music out of sight." Again we saw a similar church at Valladolid—La Antigua; but here the effect of the whole town was poor and disappointing. St. Esteban and San Martin in Segovia were far more impressive than any other.

Opposite San Esteban was the Bishop's Palace; an ancient house built of stone and ornamented with some curious reliefs of Samson. Altogether, Prison, Churches and Palace formed a remarkable group of buildings so near to each other one might suppose the sacred and ecclesiastical influence must have a direct and wholesome bearing upon the Penitentiary. Whether it has so or not, we did not discover; but we wondered whether the Bishop, bent on secret errands of mercy, ever entered the prison at nightfall, and endeavoured to bring some hope to the fallen; whispering to them with Joel of old: "*Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil.*" Words that surely would touch the most hardened.

This Church of St. Martin was a vision to which we returned again and again. Insensibly our steps would wander in that direction, until without will or guidance of our own, as it were, we found ourselves gazing upon the wonderful outlines and details which had sprung into existence seven hundred years ago; a monument of grace and beauty that, delicate and almost fragile as it seemed, has stood its ground through the rolling ages. Or crossing the road and quietly pacing the cloisters, we noted how charming looked the outside world framed in by the arcades. From St. Esteban the Bishop's Palace, venerable and dignified, suggested ecclesiastical

pomp and ceremony: visions of mitres and croziers and gorgeous vestments, with now and then a cardinal's red hat to add to the effect and colouring. From St. Martin the prison walls, visible through the end of the arcade, were dark and stern, gloomy and severe, with no pleasant association; not one penetrating ray of hope and sunshine; a strange and terrible contrast to the ecclesiastical Palace; a close and singular contact of good and evil, yet with a great gulf fixed between. Again—still framed in by the graceful arches of the arcades—we looked upon the perspective of the long street with its varied houses and ever passing groups of donkeys—those patient animals that add so much in their way to the picturesqueness—we had almost said the romance—of Spain; whilst people lounged or hurried to and fro according to their tempers and occupations.

A little below this, and just beyond the house with the diamond-faced stones was another point of a very different nature that equally attracted us.

Leaning against the old town walls we looked upon another of the wonders of Segovia: a far-stretching valley that was a perfect sea of houses. Houses everywhere, crowding one upon another, along the valley and up the slopes; sufficient to have sheltered a whole country's population, as it seemed; almost all of them apparently ready to fall into ruin with age and decay. Houses with wonderful walls and roofs, passing anything we had ever seen or dreamed of. But Spain is the country of all others for roofs of unequalled tone and beauty. There appeared to be no end to them: a town without the walls, of almost greater extent than the town within the walls. But we took in the whole of this vast view at a glance, and the effect was overwhelming. Through its centre ran a sparkling stream, whilst the narrow tortuous streets had been apparently formed without plan or design.

Above the houses rose the steeples of a few ancient churches, some of the most interesting of Segovia. The prevailing tone over all was a warm amber, mellowed by the ages. To this the sea of wonderful red roofs gave its infinite variety: all harmonising with the blue of the far-off sky.

No sound reached us from the vast area. Poverty-stricken, to the last extent it also looked, but was not. The people of Spain are poor for the most part, but it is a contented poverty. There is rarely any absolute want. A very little suffices them, and that little seldom fails—as we have elsewhere remarked.

To the left, beyond this vision of houses, stretched the Roman aqueduct, far out of sight, its double arches framing the blue sky beyond. Gazing, a magic wand transported us to the days when the Romans marched conquering through the world. We saw the army of warriors in battle array, mailed and helmeted, swords and shields flashing in the sunshine. Then, after victory, peace, with swords turned into ploughshares. The conquerors settled down and gathered

lares and penates about them, civilised their captives, performed great deeds; often proving not a curse but a blessing to the vanquished. Stretching away towards the hills was one of their lasting records: a perfect monument only possessed by Segovia. Patience and genius alone could have accomplished the work, building up huge stone upon stone, rounding arch beyond arch in faultless proportions.

Reposing in the distance, in faint and fading undulations, were the beautiful Guaderrama hills, whence flows the pure and sparkling water of the town. The vast intermediate plain, like so much of Castile, is bare and barren. Romantic in name, famous in history, its records found in the earliest archives of civilisation, the beauty of its women a constant theme for poet and minstrel, yet its aspect is too often cold, inhospitable to man, unyielding in the fruits of the earth.

But we are still leaning against the old town walls overlooking that sea of roofs and houses: swelling upwards upon the opposite slopes like the restless heaving ocean. The houses cease, and presently the slopes pass out clear and barren, and in the distance a strange sight meets the eye.

Standing up cold and naked against the sky are three huge crosses. It is a Calvary, to which the townspeople occasionally bend their steps in pilgrimage. Solitary and lonely figures passing into the silence of the country, kneel in prayer and penitence at the foot of that emblem of their faith.

A vision not to be forgotten; full of silence and repose; sharp black outlines, clearly defined. Almost it seemed that one could trace their shadows in the far off blue. The very distance surrounded them with a mystic, mysterious atmosphere. In the early morning the sun rises behind them, and the eastern skies are glowing and glorious. Against all this splendour they stand out in dark, strong relief. But towards evening when the day is dying and the sun sinks westward, its glory is thrown upon them and they seem turned to gold, warmed into life.

It so happened to us on a certain evening. One moment they had looked cold, gloomy, almost frowning; the next, the sun touching some particular point, a "divine effulgence" suddenly glorified them with well-nigh miraculous effect. Heaven's gates had surely opened to pour a flood of celestial light upon these symbols of the world's hope and refuge. Deep crimson and gold overspread the sky, and the crosses were bathed in splendour of colouring. Whether the centre cross was crowned with metal we could not say, but there appeared to go forth above it a dazzling reflection, as of the sun upon brass or silver, and we thought we traced the outlines of a crown. So far it was no doubt imagination, but it seemed otherwise. Only a strangely cold nature could have remained unresponsive.

"No Cross, no Crown," murmured H. C., with involuntary reverence. "Is it not a living embodiment of the words? I have never looked upon such a scene. What a background for the

Crucifixion of one of the old masters—if we could only transport the whole effect to that mound beyond the battlemented Damascus Gate outside the walls of Jerusalem."

It was quite true. Words and thoughts crowded upon the mind.



SANTIAGO GATEWAY, SEGOVIA.

The air seemed full of a heavenly host proclaiming glad tidings. One almost saw the shepherds of old watching their flocks by night; almost heard the rustle of angels' wings hovering above the sacred emblems.

Attached to the walls against which we leant, were the long flights
VOL. LIX.

of steps leading to the lower town—the sea of houses we have described. Whilst this sunset vision was going on, an old woman came up the steep street to our left, and paused at the head of the stairs. She must have seen eighty years of life ; her form was somewhat bowed, but her face was still comely and her dark eyes sparkled. There was yet a look of youth about the features, a reflection of the spirit within, which need never grow old.

She paused, overcome as it seemed by the vision. Then her hands clasped and her lips moved ; an expression of almost divine goodness and love glowed upon her fine old countenance. Probably she felt how close she was to the end of her own pilgrimage ; how soon all these signs and symbols would for her pass into realities. She was nearing her own sunset—should one not rather say her sunrise ? Such a face was the evidence of a good life ; an unmistakable mark which never belies itself. Many a pilgrimage no doubt had she taken in her long life, to that distant calvary ; many a prayer offered up, the mental vision resting upon a Holy of Holies beyond the skies.

Then she turned, and saw how narrowly we were watching her. There are circumstances and moments which bring even strangers into close touch with each other. Such a moment was this. She raised her hand and pointed beyond the valley.

“Is it not a wonderful vision of all the love and suffering endured for us poor mortals !” she murmured. “Ah ! senores, you have many years of your lives before you. Mine is over. Take the experience of an old woman. There is only one happy way in the world ; one prize worth living for ; one thing that brings peace at the last. There you have its emblem.”

She gave a long-drawn sigh, this singular but beautiful old woman ; a sigh that seemed a mixture of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. Probably life had been hard ; she may have endured much chastening ; her years have seen a succession of sorrows ; but if so, adversity, it was evident, had opened her heart to paradise. Many a king on his throne might have changed places with her.

Then, having finished her little sermon, she slowly passed down the steep stone stairs with hands clasped in ecstasy, disappeared within the sea of houses, and we saw her no more. We felt as though we had parted with an old friend. We knew the old woman was of those who are true and steadfast, full of sympathy and kindness, faithful unto death.

Sunset was over all ; deep rich colours that more than ever bathed the town in an eastern atmosphere. The towers of the old churches shone out in the warm glow after it had passed away from the houses. Presently twilight fell, the glory departed ; the crown disappeared, the cross remained ; once more the outlines of this calvary looked dark, mystic and mysterious, outlined against the purple sky beyond. A solitary pale star shone in the liquid ether.

Still we watched, forgetting for the moment that we formed part of

the work-a-day world and life was still before us with its common round and daily task. Twilight deepened; the houses below us were blotted out; the calvary had become invisible; even the broad outlines of the Roman aqueduct were faint and shadowy. Lights here and there marked the houses and the wakeful inhabitants. Otherwise it seemed all silence and solitude, a sleeping world.

It was a point to which we frequently returned. And one morning we trod in the footsteps of the old woman, and passed down the stone staircase—a perfect Jacob's ladder: and surely she was one of the angels—and acquainted ourselves with the old streets and thoroughfares. Even down here they seemed fairly poverty-stricken and scantily populated. Many were not even paved with stones: and a cloud of "devastating dust" was both seen and keenly felt. Many a quaint house might have gone into Noah's Ark for refuge from the Flood, and come forth with the animals. Crumbling and ruinous and wonderfully picturesque as they appeared, they were yet good for many an age to come. It was only that, happily, painter and scraper—those vile "restorers"—had spared them, and left them clothed in all the beauty and tone of extreme age. But these gems were only to be seen here and there: they were the prizes amidst many blanks, the plums in the schoolboy's cake. A large proportion of the houses were not distinguished by any special feature, so that on the whole it was more picturesque to look upon the town from the heights of the ancient walls. Nevertheless, it was an effect and assemblage rarely seen, and our Segovian dream-state was not dispelled or even interrupted.

The old churches were gems. They looked so from the heights, and a closer inspection brought no disillusion. The church of St. Millan, for instance, has been thought by certain judges to be the finest of the early churches of Segovia. But the tower was very inferior to that of San Esteban, though its tiled roof with the small window in each face was built very much on the same lines. The outline of the church is severe and its roofs are invisible, a detail by which one loses much; but with these exceptions, St. Millan holds its own.

It has small, exquisitely finished cloisters on either side, but not returning across the west front, as in San Esteban. This makes them less striking, but leaves exposed all the beauty and richness of ornamentation of the Romanesque west doorway. The fine cloisters have more solidity but less grace than those of San Esteban, whilst the shafts are coupled, and the capitals elaborately carved. The edge of the eaves-cornice is cut in a delicate interlacing tracery of ivy-leaves, beautiful and refined, of later date than some parts of the building, though not earlier than the thirteenth century. The north and south doorways were both good; solid and substantial, like the rest of the church. Solidity rather than grace was an effect aimed at by all the early Spanish architects.

The interior is very fine, but has been much modernised and restored. Yet it is still grand in many of its outlines and details, and in the parts untouched. Nave and aisles terminate at the east end with early Spanish apses—a triple apse—with engaged shafts and round-windows. There was a low square lantern at the crossing. The prevailing tone was disappointing; all its antiquity had disappeared and given place to a new-brick element that we thought very unsatisfactory. All sense of mystery and devotion was lost, in spite of the dim religious light. The first and chief feeling produced was one of solidity, and in its unrestored state its Romanesque grandeur must have been undeniable. Much of it was still there, for you cannot easily destroy the fine effect of Romanesque arches and outlines.

The arcades between nave and aisles were perfect, and before all arrested attention. They sprang from the carved capitals of the round Norman pillars, plain, severe, but splendid, looking as though they challenged time itself. The pillars are lofty and massive. Some of the caps were ornamented with foliage, others curiously represented scenes—huge figures of men and animals; one of them showing forth the Adoration of the Magi—figures the imaginative sculptor had placed upon horseback.

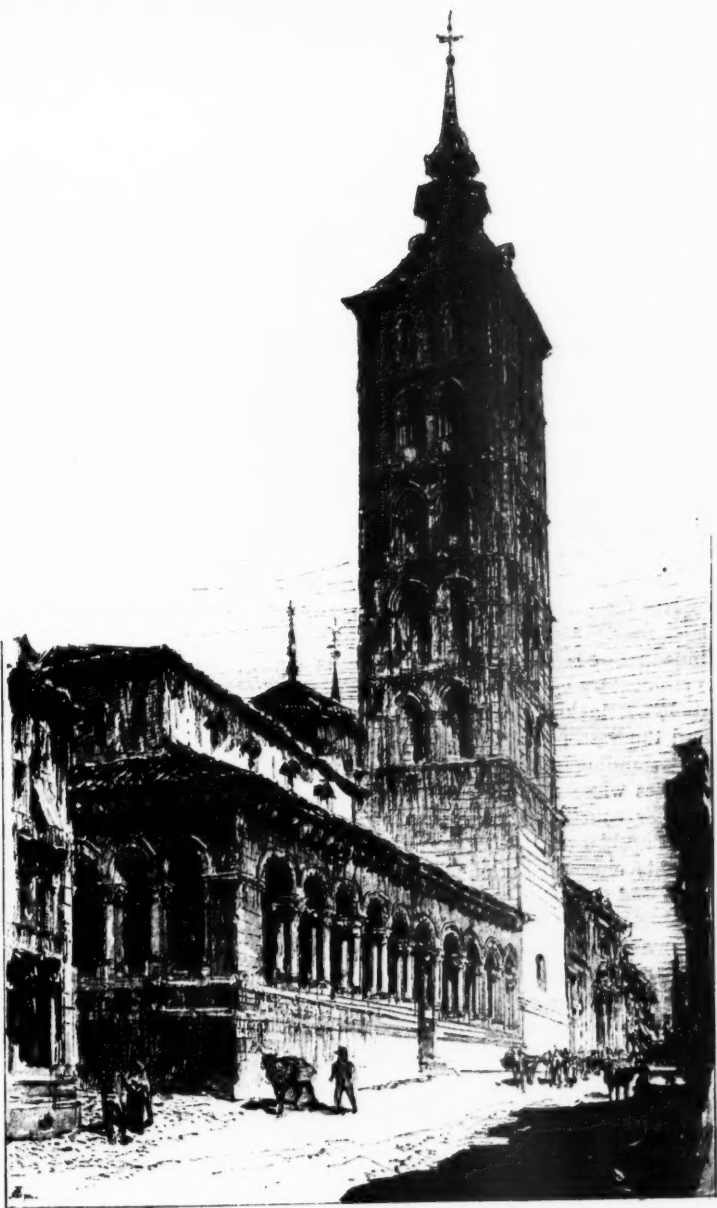
The date of the church is uncertain. It probably goes back to the 12th century, with its semicircular arches; but is said to have been founded as early as 923: a period of which there appears to be no architectural trace. Without doubt it is one of the finest examples possessed by Segovia, and probably largely influenced the church-architecture of the town.

And we have said that it abounds in churches, no less than eighteen possessing Romanesque traces. One of the most curious and interesting is that of Corpus Christi, which we discovered by accident, so hidden is it from the world in its small unsuspected corner.

We passed through a pointed arch into an open courtyard, in the further angle of which a lovely ecclesiastical doorway had caught our attention. No one went in or out; it seemed deserted; but surely something worth examining would be found there. Crossing the courtyard, which was closely built up by houses, we half-hesitatingly pushed open the doorway, wondering whether we were intruding.

Far from it. In a moment we found ourselves in a wonderful trace of the past: a small church with a Moorish nave; the exquisite horseshoe arches supported by octagonal columns with fir-cone capitals. Above was a blind triforium. The walls were wisely painted white, for the interior obscurity, whilst lending mystery, was great. Light only entered from windows on what should have been the north of the church according to the altar, but seemed nearer the west. At certain hours, when the sun shone the lights and shades thrown upon pillars and arches and pavement were exquisite.

We stood charmed beyond words at the beauty of this rare interior,



SAN ESTEBAN, SEGOVIA.

which so vividly transported us to the days of the Moors. At once we were surrounded by an Eastern atmosphere, enfolded in a sense of mystery. Alone in the church, the stillness brought with it a singular feeling of solitude and retirement from the world. No one seemed to visit this evidence of a remote age.

The windows, with their latticed panes looked on to a small enclosure in which, as far as one could tell, no footfall ever echoed. At the west end of the church opposite the altar was a large open grating, where one could not enter, with chairs and benches behind it lost in deep gloom. The church belongs to an institution. What it originally was, we did not discover, but it is now a nunnery for Poor Clares: and behind this grating the black veiled figures steal in to their devotions: silent, motionless, hopeless, for whom one feels a strange compassion.

There are nunneries in the world surrounded by the pure air of heaven; with pleasant gardens in which the cloistered women walk and gaze upon the ripening fruit and rejoice in the opening flowers, the vast blue canopy of heaven smiling over all. But here the nunnery is in the most crowded part of Segovia, and within these walls, sun and sky, and fruit and flowers are things only to dream about; blessings that rejoiced childhood and youth, but have ceased to exist.

This little church was one of Segovia's hidden gems.

Not far off was a gem of a very different description and much later date. Moreover it did not hide its light under a bushel: and indeed owed part of its charm to its open situation. The Gothic 15th-century church of San Miguel, stands boldly on the brow of the rock, overlooking the wonderful city walls, the river flowing beneath, and the vast country beyond. Its fine tower is visible far and near, and standing at the corner of the square, its Gothic cloisters and arcades white and dazzling in the sunshine are very striking. The interior consists of four bays of nave with shallow transepts, and a short apsidal choir.

This church is of much the same date as the cathedral and is supposed to be the work of the same architect. It looks down upon the remarkable little Templar church, which, one sunny morning we felt we must visit. But the doors are always locked, and the key was said to be religiously kept at the Town-hall. To the Town-hall therefore we decided to go.

The official building was situated in our square, opposite the hotel. So crossing the square for the hundredth time; and for the hundredth time pausing to gaze upon the wonderful outlines of the cathedral; we passed under the ancient arcades and mounted to the second floor of what looked like a very ordinary house. There, however, we found some civil people: and we may add that all the people of Segovia seemed inclined to be civil, hospitable and obliging. We made known our desire, and found that the key was in the possession of the town architect,

One of the officials offered to pilot us through the Segovian labyrinths to the architect's house, but on passing out of the arcades we came upon the architect himself. Matters were explained, he bowed politely, placed himself at our disposal on this and all other occasions, and as he could not at that moment accompany us, if our guide would proceed to his house, the key should be given to him. Wishing us a pleasant sojourn in fair Segovia, pointing out that the city was crowded with charms, hoping that we might meet again, he once more bowed and smiled and hurried across the square as if another great cathedral or aqueduct were in process of construction, and he was having a race with time—and no help from the powers of darkness.

Turning into the narrow streets—they are endless joys for ever—we reached the house at last which we should certainly never have found without our amiable guide. A picturesque house, with a little covered courtyard full of evergreens, and a wide shallow staircase leading up to the living-rooms. Into these rooms we did not penetrate, and so perhaps lost a fine artistic vision: perhaps, on the principle that no one is so badly shod as the shoemaker's wife, were spared a shock. Our guide rang a bell, a servant came to the door, and the key was duly handed over.

It was a lovely morning. The sun was blazing in a molten sky, and the heat was almost tropical; the very air dazzled. We reached the old Moorish gate, with its horse-shoe arch. Around us was the wonderful view. The river ran its flashing course, and beyond it rose the grey picturesque roofs of the old Mint, that in days gone by the Alcazar was supposed to protect. Now the glory of both has departed. Lower down, the stream was spanned by an ancient bridge, which we must cross on our way to the Templars' Church. Towering above it to the left was the Alcazar, crowning its precipitous rock, and from these depths its splendid outlines looked wonderfully majestic and imposing. It is impossible not to use the strongest adjectives in speaking of this place. Beyond the bridge was a small settlement of houses, and a church belonging to an order of monks or brothers not cloistered: youngish men, who went about in dark cloaks and hoods thrown back, their uncovered heads almost shaven. Again beyond this there was a convent of barefooted Carmelites; and in the church attached to it was the image of the Virgin as she miraculously appeared to Maria del Salto. A miracle seemed to attend the statue itself. According to tradition, an unseen power carried it away when the Moors invaded Segovia; and when the Christians recovered possession of the town, it suddenly reappeared on the site on which the convent now stands. From this point the rock is visible from which the leap took place: a leap that might well have tried the courage of a heroine, whilst Maria del Salto was only a frail woman. The site is commemorated by a gateway.

Again, not far off, a grove of trees led to the Ermita de Fuencisla,

where a spring of fresh water for ever runs. Here in days gone by lived a hermit whose years were supposed to equal those of the Wandering Jew. His food consisted of dry bread, and herbs which he grew around him; he drank the clear cold water of the spring. This maintained life until he became bowed and grey-headed, his long white beard swept the ground, and his senses waned: all but the keenness of his mind, which was never brighter or more serene and rejoicing than on the day of his death.

Behind the spring was a rock called *La Peña Grajera*, for the reason that criminals were hurled to their death from its height, and the crows which colonised there were ever on the watch for prey.

All this our amiable and intelligent guide informed us with much graphic power as we went along the hot white dusty road, whilst we paused every other moment in admiration of the wonders that met us on all sides. But he was evidently a nineteenth-century production, who wanted strong evidence before he could accept anything outside the ordinary laws of nature. Therefore the miraculous history of *Maria del Salto* was received with much caution. He was more practical than imaginative. We slightly touched upon this.

"What would you?" he replied laughing. "We live in a practical age; and my prosaic work at the Town-hall—helping to adjust the rates of the parish, and trying my best to make five out of two and two—does not enlarge one's imagination. I find that two and two only make four try as I will: and I place as much faith in the appearance of the Virgin to *Maria del Salto*, as I do in the legend that *il diablo* built the Aqueduct. There stands our Templar Church, and I know that we shall enter, for here is our evidence," holding up the ancient ponderous keys.

Before us the little church crowned a slight ascent. It stood out in the blazing sun, strongly outlined against the blue sky of the north, the angles supported by strong pilasters. High up in the walls were small windows, one in each angle; and just above these, the eaves of the tiled roof projected. Above this roof in the centre was a small pointed roof of great beauty, terminating, as we found, the central chamber. The colouring of the whole was mellowed to that exquisite tone which time alone gives.

The west doorway was a lovely Romanesque arch, richly moulded. Almost equally charming, though smaller, was the south doorway. Beyond this, at the south-east angle of the church, rose the tower, with its open windows in the belfry, and a tiled roof and projecting eaves. But the bells have long been silent, for it is many an age since the church was used. The Templars were suppressed in 1312: and became nothing more than a recollection: a name for all that was brave and noble; the embodiment of religious chivalry; a theme for poets and historians: a dream of the world. The little church itself, as far as the Templars were concerned, had barely a century of exist-

ence, for it was consecrated about the year 1205. Close to the bend in the road was a large grey-stone cross.

Our guide applied his keys, and after a little trouble the rusty locks gave way and the ancient south doorway slowly opened. Few people seem to care to visit it now. To the townspeople it means nothing: "a primrose by the river's brim a yellow primrose 'twas



OUTSIDE THE WALLS, SEGOVIA.

to him:" and strangers in Segovia, like Miracles in the Middle Ages, are few and far between.

The interior was very peculiar. One's first impression was its forlorn, neglected appearance: a ruin in everything excepting the walls. This perhaps was inevitable. The walls are perfect enough in construction; and there is now little else to save. The church is of course round; the nave is dodecagonal, or twelve-sided. In the

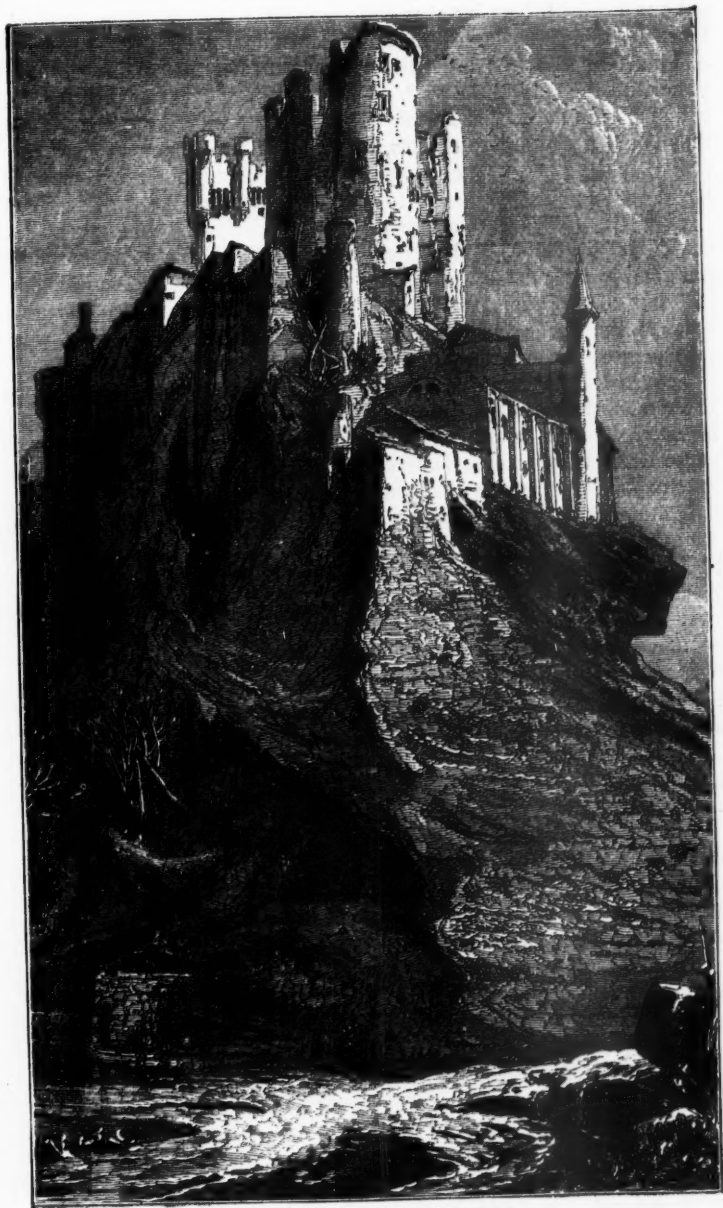
centre is a small chamber of two storeys solidly built, on the model of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Round this runs the vaulted nave, forming a circular aisle. A flight of steps lead to the vaulted upper storey, and here still stands the original stone altar, beautifully wrought. Seven small windows opened to the aisle. The room below this was domed, and the arches round the aisle were pointed. The chancel and two chapels at the east end formed somewhat stiff apses, where we found remains of extremely rich decoration. A great deal of fine moulding was still apparent; and the small pillars with their sculptured capitals supporting the pointed arches were very effective in a building otherwise remarkable for its severity. It was a gem on no account to be passed over; yielding the utmost pleasure and delight; carrying one back to those old days of the Templars as few of the remaining churches can now do.

We taxed the patience of our guide by a long and minute examination, but he was too courteous and hospitable to let impatience appear. And when once more the door turned on its hinges, and the rusty locks in their wards, and the great keys were withdrawn, our eyes still lingered upon the almost more perfect and beautiful exterior. We gazed and wondered; and still felt our Segovian dream-state unbroken. It was only another of the countless gems of the fair town: to the architect an invaluable as well as a beautiful monument, a perfect specimen of its time.

We were so near the ancient convent of el Parral, that a visit seemed imperative. Under the escort of our friendly guide—who appeared glad for once to put aside the adjusting of parish taxes—we followed the course of the river, passed under the shadow of the old Mint, and mounted the little ascent to the gates. This time we did not ring or knock, but turning the great handle, the door yielded and we entered the barren wilderness, that in days gone by had been so fruitful a garden.

Once more we looked upon the forsaken cloisters. Ruin, decay and neglect met one on every side. The sun still threw his light and shadows upon the inclosure, trying to quicken a dead world into life. Again the pillars seemed doubled. Again the silence might be felt. And again the little old woman in the grey shawl came out of her room in the upper floor. This time we knew she was not a ghost, but flesh and blood; dried up and withered, it is true, but still substance. As before, she advanced with her keys, and this now seemed to be the one occupation of her days. She evidently knew our guide and greeted him by name.

"Poor thing," he said to us aside; "hers is a melancholy history. She was once well-to-do; had a house in the town, a husband and children. I have heard that she was comely, this piece of antiquated parchment; and of course she must once have been young. No one in Segovia was brighter, happier, more active than she. Then in one sad month all was changed. Husband and children died of an epidemic;



THE ALCAZAR AFTER THE FIRE.

not one was left to her; but she, who would have died with them, escaped. In that short time she lost all traces of youth; her hair turned grey and her face white. All her living went with her husband. 'I have done with the world,' she said. 'I have nothing left to live for. I will go to the nuns of el Parral. Perhaps they will take me in.' But they could not afford to do this, for she had no money of her own, and they are poor. They were sorry for her and did the best they could—offered her this post: to live in the cloisters, keep the keys of the church, and have the care of the church itself. She gladly accepted it—and what a desolate existence! Still the people around are good to her; those who do not remember her history, know about it. But all this happened years ago, and I think she has pretty well reached the end of life. She will soon have a successor here, who may be younger, but won't be half so interesting."

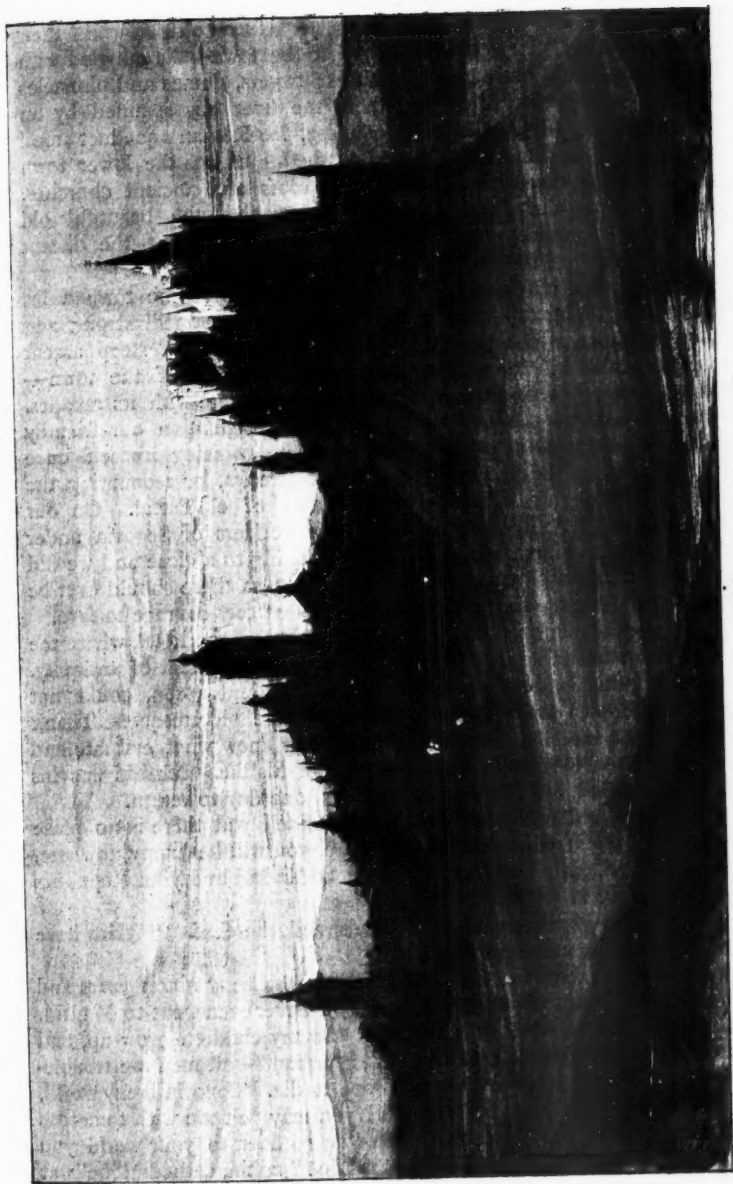
Escorted by the old woman, we passed out of the cloisters and made a short pilgrimage to the church. It was built and the convent founded by the Marquis de Villena, on the spot where he once successfully fought three famous duels. But the church has been much spoilt, and many interesting monuments have been removed. The monuments of the marquis and his wife kneeling with an attendant, are still there, though much injured.

A curiously planned church, but fine in effect. The western end is almost without windows, and the western gallery stretches half over the nave. Thus, on first entering, the impression is one of solemn gloom and repose. The east end on the other hand is lighted with twelve enormous windows, their jambs ornamented with statues of the apostles. Very startling is this contrast between the strong light of the east end, and the shadowy gloom of the west. And here, as in other old buildings, lights and shadows play their part in the element of mystery. The exterior of the church has little to recommend it.

We passed away again, the little grey old woman religiously locking up and departing with the keys. We watched her enter the cloisters, the great gate closed upon her, she returned to her solitary existence, and we saw her no more. So pathetic a figure we had seldom met with: or so sad a history.

Then we retraced our steps by the river-side, before us the ever marvellous outlines of the town: ancient walls, church towers, and great cathedral. To the left the aqueduct stretched away towards the undulating Guaderramas.

At the foot of the old bridge we parted from our amiable guide. Segovia, he confessed, was behind the times, and had no professional escorts, therefore he should be happy to be of any further use in his power. We went our several ways: he to return the keys of the Templars' church and take up again the adjusting of parish taxes at the Town-hall: we round by the south bank of the river, to revel for the hundredth time in the unequalled view.



SEGOVIA, FROM THE S.W. BANK OF THE RIVER.

The more we saw of Segovia, the greater and more impressive was its effect upon us. The solid walls of the Alcazar still crowned their rocky precipice. Beyond and above it the town-walls mingled with the stretches of Eastern-looking houses; towers, domes and pinnacles soaring yet higher. Here and there the river was spanned by an ancient bridge. Beyond the last of these, the Roman aqueduct stood outlined against the sky. Mapped out before us was the lower town outside the walls, with its wonderful roofs and ancient churches. High up was the Jacob's ladder down which the beautiful old woman had passed. She was not visible to-day, but the distant Calvary was there to our right in strong relief.

Turning, we crossed the old bridge, and skirted the town walls, the old battlemented south gateway, crumbling yet still strong and massive, above which rose the cathedral outlines. A steep ascent amidst quaint old houses—evidently a poorer part of the town—brought us again to the cathedral and the square with its arcades. Across there in the town-hall we saw in imagination our friendly guide bending over perplexing papers, and wishing himself once more following the banks of the bright Ereswa, or recounting the history of the grey woman in the cloisters of el Parral. On our part we should gladly have visited all the wonders of Segovia under his intelligent escort; but our stay was drawing to a close and we did not again cross each other's paths. That for us there should ever be an end of Segovia was a thought we had scarcely courage to face.

We said as much in the picturesque kitchen of the hotel, where the old woman was still peeling potatoes, a living monument of antiquity. The chef, resplendent as ever in white cap and apron, could not sympathise with us. He had no eye for the picturesque. Thank goodness he was not a Segovian, and hardly knew what evil fate had prompted him to spend there two years of his life. Madrid was his earthly paradise, and to Madrid he hoped one day to return.

"And I," chimed in the old woman, "tell you there is no place like Segovia. If you are not happy here, you will be happy nowhere, poor deluded, dissatisfied mortal with your Madrid and your Republics and your love of change."

"What do you know about it?" returned the chef. "What have you seen of the outside world?"

"Nothing," returned the old fossil. "In all my ninety years and more I never set foot outside Segovia. I never even went to Madrid. Here I was born, here I married and saw my children grow up, and buried my worthy but troublesome old husband—all men are troublesome, for that matter—and here I hope to die. Segovia is my world, and you will not find a better. Ah! you may pelt me with tomatoes if you like, but I tell you that when you go back to your world you will regret Segovia. Hark to that music!" as the cathedral bells at that moment rang out. "Many a time have I listened to it from the roof of the Alcazar, when my husband was keeper there. I have

heard it peeling across the valley, right down the river, right up into the mountains, and with my baby in my arms it has sung many a cradle song to hush it to sleep."

So the old woman really had some poetry and sentiment in her after all. She had not always been old and witch-like; even now was only that outwardly. The spirit had not withered with the body. We left her to her potatoes and her recollections, and went out to listen to the bells.

Once more we passed through the gateway "*del pardon*," into the interior of the cathedral. The afternoon shadows were lengthening; a dim religious light made aisles and arches beautiful and mysterious and full of repose. Awfully, inexpressibly solemn did it seem in its solitude. We were alone in the great building. Nothing broke the silence but the slight echo of our footsteps. No mass was going on, no organ sent forth sweet sounds; the bells had ceased.

Suddenly a dignified figure issued from a doorway and crossed our path, bowing as he passed. It was the Bishop. We watched him open the cloister door and disappear, leaving the door ajar. The temptation was too great. Oh, for a last look at those wonderful outlines, not personally conducted by a verger! We followed in the footsteps of the Bishop. Could one do better? He was in the very centre of the garden, looking round at the splendid architecture, now taking on all its mystic atmosphere in the evening light. How well his figure harmonised with its surroundings.

He approached us with quite a paternal smile.

"I see that you are attracted by these influences," he remarked. "I do not wonder. They are indeed beautiful, and seem to bring us nearer to that better world to which I trust we are all hastening. You love all this as much as I do—is it not so?"

We readily assented. How could it be otherwise? What would life be with no love for the beautiful? "It glorifies everything," we said, "and gilds all one's days. And where will you find such beauty as in Segovia? We have lived in a dream ever since we entered it, and almost tremble to depart. Amidst such treasures as the town possesses within the walls and without, amidst such scenes as these ancient cloisters, those wonderful cathedral outlines, dwells, it appears to us, the romance of Spain."

"True, true," murmured the Bishop. "You may listen to love-songs under the moonlight; I have heard there is intoxication in the flash of love-lit eyes; but all that passes away; it may appeal to the senses, it will never satisfy the soul. As you rightly observe, it is amidst such scenes and influences as these that you must look for the romance, the true ROMANCE OF SPAIN."

CAPTAIN ROOKE.

By F. M. F. SKENE.

I.

DOUBTLESS these last years of the vanishing nineteenth century can boast of many triumphs, scientific and otherwise, over a similar period towards the close of the eighteenth, but in one respect at least our ancestors in those days had a decided advantage over us. When they had to travel from one part of the country to the other they could make their journey a highly pleasurable excursion, instead of a dull rapid flight over iron roads, imprisoned in a close compartment with half-a-dozen strangers. They could accomplish the distance in leisurely fashion, in their own carriages or in post-chaises, stopping to admire the scenery or visit spots of interest, and enjoying the piquant excitement of a possible encounter with the still-existing knights of the road, who were invariably courteous to ladies.

Now it befell on a pleasant May day in the year of grace 17—that the young lady who was mistress of Greatorex Manor entered her carriage at her own door, for the purpose of travelling to London, in order to visit some friends during the gay month of balls and entertainments. Her own horses would take her two stages on the road, and she would post the remainder of the distance, as she meant to travel through the night, sleeping comfortably in her barouche, her maid having been sent on in advance with the luggage.

Fair and bright as the spring itself, Cicely Greatorex made a charming picture in her tight-fitting riding-habit—the travelling costume of ladies in her day—with a hat and feathers poised on the masses of her fair hair drawn high over a cushion; in her hand she carried a gold-mounted switch, on the end of which she now and then benevolently fixed a cake and handed it out through the carriage window to her old coachman. A very free and independent young lady she was, though only two-and-twenty—for her parents lay at rest in the family vault, and no brother or sister existed to dispute her rights as sole and absolute possessor of the old manor and all its dependencies.

The shades of evening were falling by the time that they had passed the second stage of the journey—where her own horses had been left, and were proceeding onward with a pair of posters.

The rural road was none of the best. Deep ruts swayed the heavy carriage from side to side, and the tall trees of a wood through which they were passing obscured the faint light that lingered in the darkling sky. The coachman did not perceive that he was skirting

a deep and wide ditch on one side, and to avoid a fallen tree on the other he went too near the edge, the ponderous carriage toppled right over, and in another moment the horses were on their backs in the ditch, struggling with their legs kicking in the air. The coachman had sprung off involuntarily, in time to save himself, and stood half-dazed on the road, with his cocked hat and wig somewhat discomposed on his head, and his long whip in his hand. His first thought was for his lady, but little active Cicely made no difficulty of scrambling out of the carriage window, and shaking her skirts free of all entanglement she soon stood unharmed by her retainer's side.

"The poor horses," she exclaimed, "see to them at once, Jasper," and she straightway aided him with all her might in the difficult task. It was impossible to extricate them without cutting the traces to pieces, and when at last they were got out of the ditch and dragged somehow on to the road it was seen that both were bleeding and seriously injured, while one was clearly hopelessly lamed.

"Whatever be we to do?" said Jasper, his eyebrows going up almost into his wig in his perplexity. "We cannot go another step with these poor beasts, Madam Greatorex."

"No, that is plain enough," said Cicely, "and you could not get the carriage out of the ditch without help, though I do not think it is much the worse, it went over so easily." She pondered for a moment, then looking round her she exclaimed: "Stay! is not this Winton Wood?"

"Ay, that it be," said Jasper.

"Then all is well. We are within a mile of the Hall, and I can go and ask Mrs. Winton to take me in for the night. She will be delighted, and I shall like to see her, so there is no difficulty at all about it. As to you, Jasper, you must get these poor horses back to the post-house as best you can, and in the morning you must hire another pair and some men to help you to right the carriage, and then you must come to fetch me at Winton Hall."

Jasper remarked to himself *sotto voce* that there never was such a clever damsel as his young madam, but aloud he only said:

"Sure and I can do your bidding, madam: still, bean't you afeard to walk through the wood by yourself, my dear lady, there might be bogies."

"Not a bit of it," she said laughing: "if I meet any bogies I'll rap them over the head with my switch; it is all right, Jasper, it is a lovely night and I shall enjoy the walk; you go your ways and I shall go mine."

And with a compassionate pat on the drooping heads of the two poor horses, Cicely started off with her light springing step, telling the coachman as she bade him good-night to be sure and bring the carriage for her as early as he could the next morning.

The walk was in truth very pleasant in the mild night air. Soon she emerged on the high road, and a few minutes more brought her to a

small side gate in her friend's park which would lead her by a short cut to the door of Winton Hall. It never occurred to Cicely to anticipate that Mrs. Winton might not be at home. She was an elderly lady who did not leave her own house from one year's end to the other, and to Miss Greatorex's certain knowledge she had not been absent for at least ten years.

It so happened, however, that Mrs. Winton had received tidings a few days before that her only son, an officer of the king's body-guard, had been struck down by the falling sickness, and she had at once started for London to nurse him through it, and remain with him till he was quite strong again if his life were spared. Anticipating a long absence she had taken all her servants with her excepting her old housekeeper, who had not slept a night out of Winton Hall for fifty years, and who did not mind remaining alone in it as caretaker.

Arrived at the front door Miss Greatorex gave a loud-sounding energetic knock upon it, which was very speedily answered.

The door was opened, but not at all widely, and the head of a man was thrust out, looking very keenly at the new-comer. Cicely gazed at him astonished, he was so unlike her friend's staid grey-headed butler, and when, seeing only a young girl before him, he threw the door open, his appearance was still more unlike what she expected to see. He had long shaggy hair falling from under a rakish-looking cap, a fierce sinister expression, and he wore a sort of hunting costume instead of Mrs. Winton's livery. Cicely, however, quickly concluded that for some reason one of the under game-keepers was assisting in the house, and made known her errand without delay.

"My carriage has been upset in Winton Wood and the horses are too much hurt to go on, so I have come to ask Mrs. Winton to give me a night's lodging. I hope she is well. I am Miss Greatorex."

Again the man looked fixedly at her, while a peculiar smile passed over his lips, but his only answer was to raise a silver whistle that hung round his neck and give a long shrill call by means of it, which was instantly responded to; the door of what Cicely knew to be Mrs. Winton's dining-room was flung wide open, and one of the handsomest men she had ever seen in her life came striding from it towards her. A gentleman unmistakably, clad in garments of the most costly material, and as he doffed his plumed hat in honour of the lady, he revealed a noble head adorned with silky dark hair which fell in curls on his shoulders, while he had refined aristocratic features and large luminous eyes of the softest hazel.

"Miss Greatorex—come to ask a night's lodging from Mrs. Winton," said the man at the door with an evil smile, but falling back with great respect before the new-comer, who was evidently his superior.

Cicely repeated her explanation, and at once, with a profound salutation, the stately gentleman begged her to come in and make herself at home, assuring her that the whole house was at her disposal.

"I trust," he said, in a singularly musical voice, "it will not

disappoint you to find that Mrs. Winton has been obliged to go to London on account of her son's illness, and she has kindly allowed me the use of the Hall for a few days while I had to be in the neighbourhood on business. I regret that I have no lady here to assist me in showing you every attention; but a suitable sleeping apartment shall be immediately prepared for you, and if you will condescend to accept my poor hospitality, you may rest assured that all due honour and respect will be paid to you."

Cicely felt that she really had no alternative; she knew that there was not any house within a long distance where she could obtain a night's lodging, and although it was a little awkward that there was no lady to receive her, she felt she might be quite at her ease with this courtly gentleman, as he was a friend of Mrs. Winton.

"You are very kind," she answered. "I fear I have no choice but to trespass on your hospitality, as I am a very long way from my own home, at Greatorex Manor; but it will be only for this one night: my coachman will bring my carriage for me early in the morning with another pair of horses."

"It can only be matter of regret that your honoured visit will be so short," replied the exquisitely polite gentleman. "Madam, I was just about to partake of a slight supper, might I have the felicity of inducing you to share it with me?"

Cicely was nothing loth to accede to this polished request, for she was in truth ravenously hungry, and her host extending a very delicate white hand gently grasped the tips of her fingers and led her to the dining-room.

There an excellent repast had been provided, mainly composed of chickens which a short time before had been running about in Mrs. Winton's poultry-yard, and some of the finest old wine out of her cellars was placed on the table. Two or three men, similarly attired to the one who had opened the door to her, waited upon her and her host, and although it must be owned they did not appear to be much accustomed to the duty, yet they acquitted themselves fairly well under the careful directions of their master.

He meanwhile entertained his guest with very brilliant conversation; he spoke of London and the court, and appeared to be well acquainted with the most prominent persons in society. He discoursed on the modes and on *belles-lettres*, and repeated some new madrigals in the soft tones of his insinuating voice, and it must be owned that Cicely soon became greatly fascinated by him, and thought she had never in her life met so agreeable a gentleman.

This impression was deepened when after supper he asked her if she was fond of music, and taking up a guitar which had been left in the room, he accompanied himself on it while he sang some pathetic love songs of unexceptionable quality, with a richness of melody and sweetness of expression which quite captivated her senses. She passed the most delightful evening imaginable. She was by no means, as a

rule, a susceptible young lady, and had been wooed in vain by many eligible suitors, who much desired to appropriate the comely heiress and her broad lands ; but for the first time in all her days she was entirely subjugated by the fascinations of her charming host.

She regretted the swift passing of the hours, when the evening deepening into night, obliged her from a sense of propriety, unwillingly to intimate that it was time she retired to rest. He also expressed his regret, but was too respectful to seek to detain her. He lighted a wax taper and asked to be allowed to precede her through the dark passages to the door of her room. Walking in advance of her to light the way, she could not but admire his tall athletic figure and the grace of his movements ; arrived near the room which she knew to be the most luxurious in the house, he gave the light into her hand, expressed a hope that her slumbers might be sweet and calm as those of an infant, and that he should have the honour of seeing her at breakfast on the following morning, and then bowing profoundly over the hand she extended to him, he took his leave and departed down the stairs.

II.

CICELY went into her bedroom, where everything had been made ready for her, in a whirl of delight and excitement. Who could this enchanting personage be ? she pondered ; evidently a man of the first rank, accustomed to the highest society—a duke perhaps—how glad she was she had met him ! the acquaintance must not stop here, and with that she began to comb out her long fair tresses and make ready for bed, as she had brought a little hand-bag with her from her carriage containing all toilet necessities. She did not hurry herself, thinking over her pleasant adventure. Night was far advanced and all sounds had ceased in the house when at last she prepared to lie down.

But just at that moment she saw the tapestry move, behind which she knew there was a door leading to the servants' quarters, and from this entrance there emerged, to her great amazement, Mrs. Winton's old housekeeper, Benson, whom she knew well. The good woman seemed to be in a sad plight, her cap was awry, her grey hair hung loose about her perturbed countenance, and her eyes were red with weeping.

"Why, Benson, is it you ?" exclaimed Cicely. "I thought you had gone to London with your mistress ; but what in the world is the matter, you look quite scared ?"

"And well I may be," she exclaimed flinging up her arms, "after all I have gone through this dreadful day, and now to make bad worse, I find you, my poor young lady, dragged into this den of robbers."

"A den of robbers ! Winton Hall ! What can you possibly mean, Benson ?"

"Ah, the villain's deceived you finely, my poor young madam! I could see it, with all his airs and graces; but you have got into the hands of a gang of highwaymen. Ay! and the very worst there are on the road. They knew the mistress was away, and they broke into the house by the back entrance, and took possession of everything valuable in it; they locked me up in my room and dared me to make a sound—they said they'd strangle me if I did, and so they would, sure enough, but they did not know there was a secret door to my room, and when I heard your knock, madam, I slipped out and looked over the stairs hoping it was the soldiers come after them, and when I saw it was you getting into their clutches, I nearly swooned; but I could do nothing till night came, and they were all snoring after their carouse—and then I stole out to warn you; it drove me nearly wild to see you going to supper so quietly with their infamous captain."

Cicely stood transfixed with astonishment for a few moments and felt horrified at the ambush into which she had fallen; but when she recalled her host of the evening, the whole story seemed incredible.

"But, Benson," she exclaimed, "are you sure there is no mistake? He was a most perfect gentleman with whom I had supper; surely it is impossible that he could be a highwayman."

"Couldn't he," said the old woman, her voice rising to a shriek; "shall I tell you who he is?—Captain Rooke, the cruel, murderous villain, and no one else!"

"Captain Rooke!"

Cicely fell back in her chair overcome with dismay. She knew the name well, for he was the most notorious character among all the highwaymen who infested the English roads at that time; not only was he the most daring and merciless of robbers, exercising unlimited control over all who were given up to the same infamous trade, but his indomitable energy and cleverness had enabled him to set all pursuit at defiance, and his hands were not free from the blood of several poor soldiers who had been sent out to capture him from time to time. Added to this, his history and origin gave him a certain prestige which excited universal interest in all his proceedings.

Every one who heard of him, and trembled at the sound of his assumed name, was well aware that he was the younger son of a nobleman, who had left his home in consequence of a quarrel with his father, and taken to the road, both as a means of living, and an outlet for the wild adventurous spirit that could not rest content in a quiet or decorous mode of existence. The very sound of his name inspired terror in all who heard it, although some traits of chivalry had been reported of him, when he encountered ladies in the carriages he pillaged on the road.

"And I have actually been sitting at supper with the infamous Captain Rooke," exclaimed Cicely. "I would sooner have died than shared his bread and salt if I had known it; but he seemed the very

pink of courtesy and refinement. However, from his manner to-night, I do not think he will prevent me from going away to-morrow as soon as my carriage comes for me. I will give notice to the authorities in the nearest town, Benson, so that they may send a troop to protect you, and clear the house of these villains—no doubt they will capture them all."

"Not a chance of that, madam," said the old woman, ruefully; "they'll be off the first moment they can in the morning, and take their booty with them; did you not see a lot of packages and boxes piled up in the hall? That is poor Madam Winton's plate, and every valuable they could lay their hands on; gold watches, jewels, clocks, and even the silver cup mistress uses at her meals!"

"The scoundrels," exclaimed Cicely; "what a miserable home-coming it will be for poor Mrs. Winton, to find her house swept clean of all her most precious goods. Well, there is nothing to be done to-night; you must stay with me, Benson, and bolt and bar the doors."

"I do not believe as they'll molest you, madam; that vile Captain Rooke looked sweet enough upon you, I could see; but I can only stay till the sun rises; as soon as it's daylight these robbers will be astir, and if they find out I have been to denounce them to you, they'll strangle me as they said."

Cicely did not attempt to go to bed; she sat at the window all night, watching eagerly for the dawn; at the first gleam of light, Benson slipped back to her prison, and about an hour later Miss Greatorex saw to her infinite relief the approach of her carriage along the avenue, and heard it drive up to the door; at once she put on her hat, threw the long train of her riding-habit over her arm, and with the gold-mounted switch in her hand, she walked down into the hall.

There she was met by her entertainer of the evening before, looking undeniably handsome and dignified, as with a charming smile he bowed low before her.

"I see the carriage is come which is to deprive me of a lovely vision," he said, "but Madam Greatorex will, I hope, honour me with her sweet company to breakfast before proceeding on her way."

Cicely looked round and saw that they were alone, none of the robber-band being near, and then gave free vent to the passion of scorn and indignation which possessed her.

"Captain Rooke," she said, in a clear ringing voice, "if I had known who you were last night, I would sooner have cut off my own right hand than sat down to table with a man whose hands are stained by deeds of blood and infamy, a robber, an assassin, living on rapine and theft. How can you—how *can* you," she continued, stamping her little foot on the ground, "you the descendant of noble ancestors; born to an unsullied name which never was tarnished till you disgraced it; how can you degrade the very

manhood within you by a low life of crime and treachery." She could not go on, palpitating as she was, from anger and excitement. The man before her had grown crimson to the temples, but he could not help admiring the dauntless girl as she flung her scornful words in his very face; there was something in her look, her voice, which restrained his passionate temper, although no one had ever so denounced him with impunity.

"You are severe, Madam Greatorox," he said hoarsely, "but you do not know the excuse I had for taking to this life. My father cast me out, and told me never to cross his threshold again. If even he would have given me money to support me, how could I take it from a man who had insulted me? Homeless, penniless, what course was open to me but the free life of the road."

"You might have gone as a sailor before the mast, or as a private in the army; you might have broken stones by the wayside, or you might have died! better death than dishonour," and with burning cheeks in her fiery indignation, while her dainty head was carried high with a haughty gesture, she turned her back on him and walked swiftly to the outer door. He followed and hastily opened it for her in silence, then she went down the steps and entered her carriage. "Drive on, Jasper," she said; "let the horses shake the dust from their feet at their utmost speed as they leave this polluted house."

The coachman obeyed. Captain Rooke stood bare-headed on the steps, hat in hand, and bowed in his most courtly manner; but Cicely made no response, she took not the slightest notice of him, and in a moment she was borne swiftly away out of his sight.

Now it would require some one better instructed than we are in the vagaries of the feminine nature to account for the fact, that when Cicely Greatorox found herself well away from Winton Hall and its strange occupants, a great change passed over her expressive face; the bright colour faded from her cheeks, her clear blue eyes became dim with tears, and in another moment she bent her head on her clasped hands and sobbed as if her heart would break, while through her troubled spirit there stole, in softest melody, the sweet refrain of one of the pathetic love-songs she had heard the night before from the matchless voice of her courteous unknown host.

III.

MORE than two years had passed away. A good deal of the time had been spent by Cicely on the Continent, accompanied by an aunt who acted as her chaperon, and she had now come back to spend a few weeks in London in that lady's house. Many suitors had sought to win the wealthy and beautiful heiress during these years, but always in vain, though she could not herself have explained the feeling which prompted her to dismiss them, one and all; only she knew that never

did any man speak words of love to her without the echo coming back, as an undying memory, of the plaintive refrain that smote on her heart with its entrancing melody that eventful evening at Winton Hall. She had gone to France immediately afterwards, and knew nothing of what had happened to the robber band. As a matter-of-fact the gang had been broken up at once after her adventure.

Mrs. Winton had found to her great surprise that the packages containing her plate and valuables, made up for removal by the highwaymen, had not after all been taken from her house. Everything she possessed was found intact, and the housekeeper had suffered nothing but her first alarm. Then it became known that Captain Rooke had completely disappeared, and his followers, disorganised and quarrelling among themselves, were for the most part captured and duly hanged, as was the custom of the times.

There was a great ball at the house of a distinguished lady, who was an intimate friend of Cicely's, and she was among the guests, looking lovely in her rich dress with soft white feathers waving over her pretty hair. She had danced one or two measures with assiduous cavaliers and was resting on an ottoman, when the lady of the house came and sat down beside her.

"There is a gentleman here who particularly wishes to be introduced to you, Cicely," she said, "and he would have come with me now only he was stopped by the prince who desired to speak with him. Have you ever heard of him—Lord Lismere?"

"The name seems familiar to me, but I do not remember where I have heard it," she answered.

"Well, Lord Lismere is a great favourite in society, and he has had a romantic history, though the full details of it are not quite understood. His father—now dead—was known to be a man of most violent temper; he had a deadly quarrel with his son, who was a very high-spirited young man and quite in the right, I believe, in the matter on which they differed, but the old lord turned him out of the house and repudiated him altogether, as he had an elder son who was his heir. The poor young fellow, cast out without means or resources of any kind, took to wild ways—very wild ways indeed, I fear, of a most undesirable nature—but quite suddenly, two or three years ago, he gave them all up and became a completely reformed character. He enlisted as a mere private in the army and saw a good deal of active service in foreign parts, where his conspicuous bravery soon won him his commission and brought him into companionship with men of his own rank; his elder brother died and he thus became heir to his father's title and estates. The old man was disposed for a reconciliation, but before they could meet he too had passed away, and the outcast son entered into possession of all the wide lands pertaining to his noble name. He found that the vast estates required his personal care, so he left the army and settled down in the home of his family, where he is known as the best and kindest of masters."

"That is, indeed, an interesting story," said Cicely; "but why should Lord Lismere wish to know me, as you say he does?"

"That I cannot tell," replied the lady. "Perhaps he was attracted by your winsome face; but the very moment he saw you enter the room, he came and asked me to present him to you. Ah! and here he is coming towards us!"

Cicely looked up to see a splendidly handsome man dressed in faultless evening costume, who stood deferentially before her as her friend introduced them. He asked if he might have the honour of her hand for the next dance, and as she agreed, he raised his head, which he had held somewhat lowered, and she saw the clear-cut features and beautiful hazel eyes she remembered so well; in an instant she knew him. She caught her breath while the hot colour flew into her face, but Lord Lismere had taken her hand and led her towards the dance circle. She saw that he had recognised her as perfectly as she had remembered him, while his countenance was singularly grave and almost mournful, and he maintained a complete silence which she had not the courage to break, recollecting with great dismay the burning words of contumely and reproach which she had last addressed to this stately nobleman.

They went through the dance without a syllable spoken between them, but when it was over Lord Lismere said courteously though firmly:

"Miss Greatorex, I must ask you to allow me a few minutes' conversation. I will not detain you very long. There is a small room at the end of this suite where very few people are passing. Will you permit me to find you a seat there where we can be undisturbed while I seize this opportunity of explaining much I have long desired to make known to you."

She murmured an assent, for she felt he had a right to make the request, and soon they were seated side by side in a quiet corner where they were quite unobserved by the other guests.

"Miss Greatorex," said Lord Lismere, "I have asked to speak to you alone, that I might thank you with all my heart and soul for the splendid service you did me on that one occasion when we met under circumstances that were a shame and disgrace to me; your noble words of pure and burning indignation at my unworthy conduct opened my eyes suddenly to the true nature of the infamous trade in which I had embarked. Believe me, before I saw you, the glamour of the wild adventurous career, with all its danger and daring, had blinded me wholly to its guilt and degradation; but when you, a fair young girl with magnificent courage and high-souled abhorrence of injustice and oppression, denounced me to my face, the scales fell from my distorted vision. It was as though a new being had been born within me. I was filled with detestation of my former life; I longed to redeem the past, and I took a secret vow then and there that for all the rest of my existence I would live a pure and honour-

able life as a righteous man, and that vow I have kept unswervingly from the moment that your carriage bore you away from my longing eyes! From that hour I was a highwayman no more for ever! I restored Mrs. Winton's property, I dismissed my followers, I enlisted as an ordinary soldier to serve my country. I toiled to build up a blameless character for myself till I was called to my present position, in which I strive still to maintain it, and all this, Cicely Greatorex, I owe to you, and I thank you for it deeply, humbly, and most sincerely."

She strove to express her delight at what he had said, to beg his forgiveness now for the insults which had sprung from her lips on that memorable day, but she was in fact too much moved to explain her feelings clearly, and as some persons came into the room they returned in silence to where her aunt was seated.

After that evening Lord Lismere and Miss Greatorex met very frequently, both at various entertainments to which they were invited, and at the house of her aunt, where he called as often as the etiquette of the day permitted. They became great friends, and finally much more than friends.

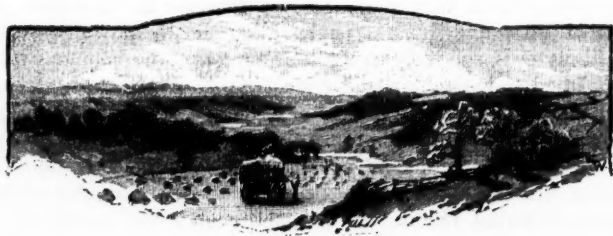
One morning, a few weeks later, Cicely came into her aunt's room with a radiant light in her eyes and a soft flush on her delicate cheek.

"Aunt," she said, holding out her hands with a rapturous gesture, "wish me joy. I am going to marry 'Captain Rooke!'"

"Captain *who*!" said her aunt amazed, for she had been absent from England when that name was notorious, and had never heard it. Cicely crimsoned all over her fair face.

"Oh, what possessed me to utter that name?" she said confused. "I mean Lord Lismere."

"Ah, Lord Lismere! Well and good. I can congratulate you, my dear, with all my heart on a union with him, for he is a noble gentleman, honourable, true and good. You will be very happy, I doubt not, if your life is henceforward to be spent by his side."



MAJENDIE'S HEROISM.

BY INA GARVEY.

SEVEN or eight years ago, in his quarters in barracks at Gibraltar, Gilbert Majendie, lieutenant, 1st battalion West Middlesex Regiment, sat alone, and tried to realise that the sweetest hope of his life was suddenly blasted. His gaze rested on the blue tideless ocean, glorious under a brilliant spring sun, round which gathers all the history of the whole world; but his thoughts were far away in England, and though they were with the past, it was the past of scarcely a year back.

Close to his hand lay the London newspaper that he had been reading with a careless eye, until he came to that fatal paragraph—

"Yesterday morning at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, was solemnised the marriage of Sir John Latimer, Bart., of Latimer Court, and Catherine Mary, daughter of the late Colonel Edward Wilmot of the Lawn, near Levelbury." That was the paragraph that had suddenly turned the world dark to poor Majendie. He had come in an hour ago light-hearted and happy. "I think I'll write to Kitty," he had said to himself, but before sitting down to the pleasant task he had glanced over the newspaper—and now——

Only nine months since, the 1st battalion of the West Middlesex had left Levelbury, and he and she had said good-bye. It had not been a formal engagement. Mrs. Wilmot, a well-connected widow of slender means, had objected to that; still, she doated too fondly on her beautiful, only child to interfere seriously with her happiness. In a year's time Kitty would be of age, and if she then continued in the same mind, and if Mr. Majendie had a fair prospect of promotion, why, Mrs. Wilmot would not hinder the course of true love. In the meantime they might occasionally write to each other.

"But, you know, Bertie,"—that was Kitty's soft voice speaking, those were Kitty's large violet eyes looking up at him, the little hand that nestled within his arm, the graceful figure in its dainty flannel tennis-dress, were Kitty's; they had been to tennis at the Levelbury Club ground, and were taking a stroll by the river afterwards. "But, you know, Bertie, you have no need to be disappointed and unhappy, because mamma doesn't want us to be formally engaged, and won't let you give me a ring. To me our engagement is as binding and as serious as if you had given me half-a-dozen rings!"

These were the words that Majendie was recalling now, with his heart cold and dead as stone.

She had never loved him, he said to himself, never! She had only

amused herself with his devotion. It was not so impossible for a nature like Majendie's to believe this, as to suspect the truth; that Catherine Wilmot *had* loved him as well as her shallow, vain soul could love any one; but that when he was gone—when she was a guest at Aunt Dallamont's, and Sir John Latimer, the wealthy young baronet, who had been one of the "catches" of the previous London season, had singled her out for attention to the envy of all the girls round, and of her cousin, Clare Dallamont, in particular; why, then, everything but her triumph had faded from Kitty's eyes, and in a flush of pride—though still with a little fluttering sigh to the memory of "poor Bertie, whom it is my duty to forget, hard as it seems"—she had accepted Latimer after a fortnight's courtship. She had decided that it was best not to write and tell "poor Bertie." The letter she had written just before paying the visit that had had such disastrous results for him was the last he had received.

And there was a subordinate element of extreme bitterness to torture him—though all seemed comparatively insignificant beside his great anguish. Latimer had been a familiar comrade in old Sandhurst days—dull, heavy, good-tempered Latimer, who had entertained a humble and admiring friendship for the more dashing, popular, and, in every way better gifted Gilbert Majendie; he had been far enough from the baronetcy then; and a blush of shame rose to Majendie's cheek at the thought that if Latimer had continued poor and untitled, Catherine Wilmot would never have preferred him to his once comrade.

"No, no!" he cried, starting up to pace the room again; "I will try to think they forced her into this marriage; she never really cared for me, and they have persuaded her to throw me over; I will try to think that had she really loved me, no threats or persuasions could have shaken her constancy. I must try to keep some faith in her, and in what might have been, or I am lost!"

He threw himself into a chair beside the table, dropped his head upon his folded arms, and there was silence in the room.

"News, news!" cried a merry voice as the door was thrown open and Treherne entered with small ceremony. News, Majendie! Grand, glorious news! We're ordered to Egypt, and the 2nd battalion of the Broadshire is already on its way to take our place here. Rouse up, old fellow! 'Honour ne'er was won in sleeping!' Here's a chance of glory and mural crowns for both of us!"

The lieutenant clapped Majendie on the back, and as the latter raised his head and looked at him, Treherne repeated his news, adding—

"What, Majendie, old fellow, dreaming still?"

Majendie's dark eyes left his comrade's face and turned to the sea and sky without. "No," he said sadly, "not dreaming, Frank—waking!"

Two years had gone since Frank Treherne burst in upon his sad

comrade with "news, glorious news!" Two years of hard service and honourable distinction for the 1st battalion of the West Middle-shire Regiment. "Here's a chance of glory and mural crowns for both of us," Treherne had cried in his elation. Well, glory had come in plenty to one of them, but not to him who had anticipated it in those light-hearted words. It was to Gilbert Majendie that fate, after robbing him of his dearest hope, had given opportunity to display brilliant valour and unusual gifts as a leader of men. It was Gilbert Majendie who, now a brevet-major, had already, through his frequent mention in despatches, become familiar by name to those at home eagerly following the course of their countrymen's arms in burning Africa.

It was the summer of 1884. The campaign, whose work had been the shattering, though not annihilation, of the rebel Osman Digna, had been closed in the spring by the withdrawal of the British force from the Eastern Soudan, and a lull in the sounds of war had succeeded.

Gilbert Majendie, summoned home by family matters of importance, had obtained a few weeks' leave, and was in England—in London.

The season was at its height, and the young soldier found himself compelled to take some part in the gaieties of fashionable circles, and in which his military exploits bid fair to make him a lion.

On a certain evening Lady Henry Charteris was "at home." Her brilliant rooms, fragrant with rare flowers, were crowded with the "best" people in town.

"Who *is* he? did you ask, my dear?" said one lady to another, raising her long-handled glasses to her eyes, and turning her glance on a graceful attractive young man who stood chatting with a chance-met acquaintance just within the inner drawing-room. We know him well, though two years of hard service have done their full work on him; the cheek is worn and thin, the dark eye a trifle hollow, and already, when in repose, the face has begun to wear the sorrowful stern look seen on so many soldier-faces. "Who *is* he? did you ask, my dear?"

"He's young Major Majendie, the very last brand-new thing in heroes! And looks it too, which all heroes don't. Lady Henry would be sure to have him; she has every one who's talked about. But I've heard he hates being lionised. Handsome fellow, isn't he? I must try to secure him for my next party. By the way, Mary, I'm at my wits' end for some really good 'draw.' The Montazini Family, who play all sorts of instruments, without either legs or arms, ask such enormous terms, or I should have engaged them."

Majendie had reached the head of the great staircase, on his way out, when a hand clapped him on the shoulder, and a loud voice said: "Hullo, Majendie! You've not forgotten old Sandhurst days, and Jack Latimer, I hope?"

Majendie turned, and was confronted by an enlarged and swollen edition of his ancient comrade. Beside him was a beautiful woman,

her white bosom and fair head sparkling with diamonds, her exquisite bloom thrown up by the sombre delicacy of a black lace gown, on whose bodice and train were arranged long, faintly tinted, blush-rose trails.

"We saw you in the rooms, but there was such a deuce of a crush we couldn't get to you. A thousand congratulations, old fellow, on your well-earned fame. I needn't introduce you to my wife; she tells me she was slightly acquainted with you in former days."

"Slightly acquainted." Majendie gave one swift eloquent look into the violet eyes that were suddenly raised to him with a supplicating expression, then he bent low over the warm gloved hand held out to him.

The party was about to proceed downstairs, when Sir John Latimer was momentarily detained by a passing friend; nothing remained for Majendie but to escort Lady Latimer to her carriage. As they passed down the broad staircase together, her hand within his arm, as it had last been by the laughing stream, and under the trees of Levelbury, he spoke for the first time:

"I am rather late in offering Lady Latimer my congratulations; I hope she will accept them now."

The voice was cold, the dark eyes looked straight before him. The hand upon his arm trembled. "Don't speak to me like that; you used not to be cruel in the old days," said a soft fluttering voice.

"No!" he said as coldly as before. "It was certainly not *I* who was cruel then."

Not another word was exchanged between them. But in spite of his cold words when alone with Lady Latimer, in spite of the, to her, quite apparent reluctance with which he had accepted the invitation afterwards so effusively pressed on him by Sir John, for "any evening when he had nothing better to do," there was a strange turmoil in Majendie's soul, as he walked back to his hotel under the summer stars: those violet eyes had roused feelings that he had hoped were conquered.

May heaven protect you, brave Majendie, and keep you from the toils of your old love, who did her best to wreck you in deserting you, and who now, it may be, is nourishing thoughts yet more fatal to you than her inconstancy of the past.

Lady Latimer found a charming excitement in her former lover's reappearance on the scene as a celebrity and a hero. His very coldness and avoidance of her were salves to her vanity, for they did but serve to show how he must have suffered in losing her. Still, that coldness must be vanquished, and with her sweet dark blue eyes, and her soft regretful voice, Lady Latimer waged war with it.

She succeeded, but too well. Alas! As the weeks went on, she saw the cold half-stern reserve give place gradually to the look she knew so well in old Levelbury days. By every art she strove to rouse again the flame that poor Majendie had scarcely succeeded in

quenching, and then, as she watched it rise as bright as of yore—then, this woman, vain and weak, and with but vague and shadowy principles, found that she had played with edged tools, found that the love which, when it had been blameless, had not been true enough, or deep enough, to keep her from a mercenary marriage, had risen again in her own heart, risen with a new and sudden might that honour and duty were all powerless to control.

“Thank God! these weeks of torture are over, and I shall see her no more!” cried Majendie.

His leave was almost up, and on the following day he would quit England. He had turned in at his club, after leaving P.P.C. cards on the various friends—the Latimers among others—who had entertained him during his short stay in London.

Before he had well uttered the words, a little note was brought him, addressed in a hand he had known well once; and with a feeling of dread he opened it.

“Did you really mean to leave England without saying good-bye, except by a formal card? Surely not! If this finds you in time, and if you have any remembrance of old days, I think you will come; I am at home and alone.”

That was all. No name was appended. Majendie twisted the note in his hands—grew red and then pale. “I ought not to go—I must not go,” he said, and then he thrust the note into the breast-pocket of his coat, and left the club for Bruton Street.

The room was cool and shady. Sun-blinds shut out the glare of the July sun and the heat of the dusty street: flowers, brilliant and fragrant, bloomed from stand and table; lace curtains stirred gently in the sultry breeze.

“I could not let you leave without a farewell, without asking you, as I have not yet had an opportunity of doing, to say you forgive me for the past; but you seem to have grown cold and cruel again as you were weeks ago.”

“Lady Latimer, if one of us two was cruel to the other in the past, it was not I. If one of us two is cruel to the other now—far crueller even than then—it is not I. You nearly worked my ruin once, and now, with that marriage ring on your finger, you seem bent on finishing the work that, by God’s mercy, was not then completed.”

He was standing by the table, on which his clenched hand rested. His face bore sad marks of the passionate conflict that had raged within him for many days, and was now at its height. Did she know with what a mighty effort he held aloof from her, with firm voice and set face, when her fair head drooped so piteously, and her plaintive tones were tremulous almost to tears?

"I cannot expect you to be anything but stern and cold, I suppose, not even for the sake of old days! I cannot expect you to believe that I was forced into my marriage—that I am not happy in it—and that no worldly advantages could give me an hour's consolation for—all—that—I—lost!"

The voice grew softer, and more tremulous, and then ceased.

Whatever falseness—conscious or unconscious—her words held, they held none for Majendie. He saw her there before him in her graceful rose-tinted draperies; he saw the head with its rich fair hair drooping in sorrow. He believed her every word, and in the agonising conflict of love with honour and duty, drops of sweat started out on his pale brow. Then her head was lifted; her deep blue eyes, on whose long lashes tears were shining, were raised to his, and in a long, long gaze those eyes offered him again the love whose loss had clouded his life.

Has she conquered him at last? Is his proud, brave, honourable soul subdued? He is beside her, his arm is around her waist, her head lies on his shoulder, her fluttering breath is on his cheek; has she indeed conquered?

"Kitty," he says, bending down to her—and though his face is ghastly pale, it has grown calm—"I forgive you for all; and it is because I remember old days so well, because I remember all their purity and happiness, and how deeply and truly I loved you then, that I am going to save you from yourself now, and bid you good-bye for ever." He held her for a moment longer, kissed her once on the forehead, then hastily quitted the room and the house.

A good many months later, when the sounds of war came louder and fiercer than ever from the distant African Desert—when England's great heart was bleeding freshly over the fall of Khartoum and the fate of its heroic defender—a good many months later—on an evening in early spring, the company was arriving at a great reception in Belgrave Square, for the pre-Easter season was in full swing, and town was nearly full. A lady, young and beautiful, her delicate bloom enhanced by her white furred wraps, had alighted from her carriage, and was about to enter the brilliant mansion, when something caused her to turn her head and linger a moment on the threshold. Two men were coming along the street crying the latest war news in their harsh ear-splitting voices—"Great battle fought this day!—enemy completely routed!—heavy British losses!"

For a short moment Lady Latimer paused on the threshold of that gay mansion and listened to the cry; then she turned and went in—went in to the bright, crowded rooms; the music, the flattery, the admiring glances, the frivolous chat, which form the proper world for such as she—the only world in which, despite the brief madness during which she had tried to believe otherwise, such as she can feel lasting content,

"Great battle fought this day!"

Here, in the solemn desert, under the silent stars, is the mournful sequel to that great battle. Here, the dead are finding sepulture where no loving hearts can come to mourn by-and-by beside their graves. Here the dying, who were so high in hope this morning, are bearing patiently their agonies, and meeting the last enemy with the same stern courage that, hours ago, drove back the dusky Arabs.

In one of the hospital-tents, lying flat on his hard couch, his red blanket covering him, is Gilbert Majendie—hidden beneath its bandages is a ghastly chest-wound, that is to rob his country of a young hero, and render an English home very desolate. He is journeying far down in "the valley of the shadow;" when the not distant dawn shall break, he will be where night and day are not, and the world will be the poorer.

The just-ended visit of the general roused him for a time; the warm words of praise bestowed on the dashing charge that he had led a few hours back brought a bright flush of pleasure to the young soldier's dying face; but when the general left the tent, to pay other mournful visits, the gleam of life began to sink fast.

"Treherne, are you still there? my sight grows dim."

"Yes, I'm here Majendie. Oh! if only it could have been me! I should have been nothing of a loss."

"Nonsense, Frank! I happened to get chances that you didn't—that was all."

There is a brief silence, broken by the distant voice of a wounded Arab, left to die when his countrymen retreated, calling shrilly on Allah.

"Could you manage to raise me a little, Frank?"

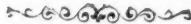
The dying man speaks feebly and with difficulty.

"I've got my marching orders now, I think." Treherne raises him gently.

"You'll remember about the messages you promised to take to my people at home?"

"I will, dear fellow—and, be sure that if anything can make up to them for your loss, it is the fame you leave behind you."

"Fame? Ah, Frank! It is so little to lead charges, so little to sally out under fire and bring in the wounded. The only hard duty I ever had—the only brave thing I ever did—was to run away!"



IN SUNNY JUNE.



I.

LIONEL FORBES sat in the arbour smoking. All around him lay the sunlit garden, bounded by a low fence, beyond which swept the curve of the white road, which ran under the shadow of a towering tor. It was a hot afternoon, and save for the incessant buzz-z-z of the drowsy bees, and the soothing murmur of a pleasant little stream that purled along on the other side of the dale, there was not a sound to be heard. The little picturesque cottage, even, seemed to be asleep, and the breeze had not sufficient strength to flutter the muslin curtains at its quaint, open windows. Lionel puffed lazily at his old briarwood pipe, and went back dreamily in

thought to the day of his arrival in Peak Vale.

He had come to Derbyshire ostensibly on a walking tour; but, arriving at Peak Vale—I withhold the real name of this delightful little village because I want it to remain uninfested by tourists—and discovering that a trout stream ran through it, and reflecting that angling was an occupation more suited to the intensely hot weather than tramping over miles of dusty road, he decided to remain in this restful haven for a few days, and enjoy its beauty and repose. Besides this, he suddenly remembered that an old chum of his had recently obtained a curacy at Peaktown, a mile away, and on the afternoon of his arrival he decided to look him up.

Geoff Barry was naturally delighted to see his friend. In this little out-of-the-way spot (which was ten miles off the railway route) one was almost entirely cut off from communication with the outer world, and the advent of a stranger, particularly if he came from London, was hailed with great joy. But when the stranger happened to be an old college associate with whom one could talk over the days which they had spent together at King's, and the present doings of men of the particular "set" to which they had belonged, that joy was greatly enhanced, and the young clergyman's only regret was that a room could not be found for Lionel Forbes in the house where he was lodging.

"But I'll tell you where you can stay," he said, as the two men walked down to the garden gate, "and that's at Dale Cottage, half a mile from here. You must have passed it as you came up from Peak Vale; an idyllic little place, with thatched roof, and rose-covered porch, and a lawn in front with a cedar in the centre."

His friend remembered seeing it.

"But it doesn't look like a place where one could get rooms," he demurred.

"I daresay not; Mrs. Leslie, the landlady, is a very refined woman of gentle birth, and she keeps the place very dainty. As a matter of fact, she is the widow of a great speculator, who made a fortune, and lived in fine style at one time, but came to smash after a bit, as so many of them do, and died of heart disease just at the right moment, leaving his wife and daughter to face the angry creditors. After things were settled they came down here, and the mother ekes out her scanty income by taking in summer lodgers, while Miss Leslie teaches Lord Featherstone's twin girls. In the winter she goes up to the Hall, but during the warm weather they come down to the cottage. You'll find her a most charming girl," added Geoff, colouring slightly.

So Lionel thanked his friend, and retraced his steps until he reached the idyllic little place with the rose-covered porch. There he paused, and, after satisfying himself that this was Dale Cottage, walked up to the front door (which stood invitingly open) and rang the bell. Scarcely a moment had elapsed before a small handmaid, her red cheeks shining and her smooth hair adorned with a cap, appeared at the open glass door leading to the back-garden, and asked

him to step within. Lionel obeyed, though he glanced with some compunction at the marks of white dust which his boots left on the smooth red tiles. In another minute he was bowing to a middle-aged lady, with a gentle, composed face, who quietly asked him if he wanted rooms.

"Yes," said Lionel, smiling frankly. "Mr. Barry, my friend, recommended me to come here."

Mrs. Leslie smiled. "Ah! then will you come this way, please?" she said, leading the way upstairs.

The rooms which were to be let were very small, but tastefully furnished, and odorous with flowers. From each window was to be obtained a view of the road, with the picturesque stream bordering it, and the tors rising up, grey and jagged above. Lionel decided that he was in luck's way, and when he had had his tea, which the little maid spread out on a round table pushed close to the open casement, he told himself that he should be quite content to spend the rest of his days in this lovely spot.

The sun was beginning to sink slowly in the west, when Lionel, having decided to go for a stroll, walked out into the sweetly smelling garden. As he neared the gate, he saw that a girl was standing there who, perceiving him, drew back gracefully to let him pass. She was rather small and slender—indeed, in her simple pink frock, with the carelessly tied black ribbon round her waist, she looked almost a child, until she turned her head, and discovered a sweet, thoughtful face, upon which trouble had already set its mark in an expression of unusual gravity for one so young. Her soft, brown hair lay in pretty curls on her forehead, and Lionel, who was a particularly observant man, noticed that on the third finger of her left hand, which rested upon the gate, she wore a simple engagement ring.

He raised his cap.

"I am the new lodger," he said, "and I think you are Miss Leslie."

The girl smiled—a charming, spontaneous smile.

"Yes," she said simply. Then added: "I hope you like your rooms?"

"I could not help doing that, they are so pretty," Lionel said with enthusiasm. "Indeed, everything is pretty about here." He glanced round at the landscape, but his eyes came back to her face.

"Yes," said Miss Leslie, "and this is such a beautiful county. I never thought, before I came here, that any part of England could be so lovely."

"You had not travelled much, I suppose?"

"Not very much in England. Are you going to stay here? You will have good fishing."

"Yes," he answered, "I am looking forward to that. The trout seem very plentiful."

She made no answer, and as there seemed to be no excuse for

saying anything more, the "new lodger" remarked that he was going for a little stroll, raised his cap again and wished her "good-evening."

And he felt that the girl's eyes followed him down the road, while the remembrance of her face certainly accompanied him all the way.

II.

LIONEL FORBES sat, as has been said, in the arbour, his thoughts going back to the day of his arrival in Peak Vale. Then he had only intended his stay to be of about a week's duration—it had extended to four. He told himself irritably that he ought to be going; his mother was beginning to ask the reasons for his prolonged stay in such a retired little village, and he himself felt that it was not very wise to remain any longer under the roof that sheltered Mary Leslie.

At first he had seen very little of his landlady's daughter, for Mary was too proud to force her company upon her mother's lodgers. Although not ignorant of the fact that she was pretty, she was not vain enough to think that everybody wanted to know her for that reason. Perhaps, too, the troubles which she and Mrs. Leslie had gone through had helped to make her reserved, and beside all this, what with her teaching and other manifold duties, she had not much time to spare for cultivating intimacies with people whom, when once they had left Dale Cottage, she was not likely to meet again.

But somehow Lionel Forbes managed, after a while, to get on very friendly terms with her. For one thing, they speedily discovered that they had many likings in common, also that they had visited the same places on the continent, also that they had a mutual friend in a dear old lady whose wit and benevolence had made her very popular in London society. And then, too, Mary was exceedingly fond of hunting in all sorts of inaccessible corners of glens and tors for ferns, and as Lionel suddenly discovered that he had, likewise, a mania for the same thing, it became necessary for Miss Leslie to accompany him on several walks, that she might be able to show him the places where the best specimens were to be found.

And now Lionel Forbes told himself that it had all been a mistake, for do what he would he *could* not feel happy in the possession of Miss Leslie's friendship alone; he was obliged to confess that he wanted nothing less than her love. And that, of course, was impossible, for was not she irretrievably bound to another? Barry had told him that—poor Barry, who was nearly as hard hit as himself—and the ring on her left hand proved beyond a doubt that it was true.

Lionel roused himself from his lounging position and knocked the ashes out of his pipe. He was preparing to leave the arbour, when he caught sight of Mary emerging from the porch, with her pupils on either side of her. They came down the path, their arms

linked lovingly together, and at the gate which was near the arbour, they all paused. The governess-cart from the Hall could be heard bowling down the road.

"Now good-bye, children," he heard her say; "don't forget to learn your lessons, and, remember the picnic!"

"Do you suppose we'd forget *that*, you dear old thing!" with which very irreverent words the eldest girl flung her arms round her teacher's neck, and kissed her effusively.

"You are so very, *very* pretty," she added with refreshing candour.

"Muriel, you silly child!" said Mary, shaking the little girl laughingly, while the colour deepened in her cheeks at the outrageous compliment which, because so evidently unpremeditated, was so sweet to hear.

"Now you've kissed her four times!" said Muriel's sister with an injured air.

"Well, dear, I'll kiss you six to make up for it!" and Mary released herself from one pair of clinging arms to be instantly enveloped in another.

At this moment the governess-cart drew up at the gate, and the children jumped inside, and away they went down the vale, their bright air glistening in the sunshine, while Mary watched them till they rounded a bend in the road, and were lost to view. Then she turned to go into the house again, vainly trying to smooth her ruffled hair as she went.

"Don't go in yet!" said Lionel, following her through the little conservatory.

"Oh!" she cried, "I didn't see you! I was talking to Muriel and Vera."

"You spoil those children!" he said with mock severity.

"Oh! no, you couldn't spoil them, they are too good. But they are very fond of me."

"Everybody is."

Her eyes dropped. Then she said, laughing, "How well you seem to know! By the way, Mr. Forbes, will you go picnicing with us one day next week?"

"Next week?" he repeated slowly. "I shall not be here then."

Mary caught her breath, but she answered steadily, "Are you, then, going away?"

"I must," he said; "at least, I have come to the conclusion that I have been idle long enough. I feel ashamed of myself when I remember how busy you always are."

"But it's different for me."

"Yes, so far different that you ought not to work at all."

"But is not every one happier when they have something to do?"

"I suppose so; yet what will you say if I tell you that I never did a stroke of work in my life? I was born with what people call a 'silver spoon' in my mouth, and plenty of money to spend,"

"But you are taking a holiday now; after it is over, you will work. Mr. Barry says that you write sometimes."

"Ah, Mary," said he, taking both her hands, "and why should I write any more? Who cares whether I succeed or not?"



"WHO CARES WHETHER I SUCCEED OR NOT?"

"There is your mother," said the girl softly. "And I—I as your friend could not but be glad if you achieved any fame."

"If only—if"—began Lionel, and then stopped abruptly and walked away.

And Mary, standing where he had left her, stood, with bent head, moving the little ring up and down her white finger.

"Ah, Dick," she murmured to herself, "I am afraid I don't care for you as I fancied I did when I was a silly girl of seventeen. Oh, if you could only come back, perhaps your presence might make me braver. Though whatever comes, and however hard it may be, I will keep my faith with you."

III.

THREE days later, Lionel, coming down the stairs of Dale Cottage, set down his portmanteau in the hall and knocked at the school-room door. There was not a sound to be heard; it was Saturday, and the children had a holiday.

Receiving no reply, he gently opened the door, and at first perceiving nobody there was about to withdraw, when he caught sight of Mary crouched on the window-seat, her frame shaking with sobs. For one wild, happy moment he thought, "she is crying because I am going away;" then his eyes fell on a thin envelope bearing foreign stamps which had fallen to the ground, and he instantly surmised that she must have had news of her lover.

While he was wondering whether he should go or stay, Mary lifted her face from her hands, and rose with a startled exclamation. As she did so, a ring rolled from her lap on to the floor.

Lionel closed the door and went forward. "Forgive me," he said, taking her hands, "I did not mean to intrude, but I am going away, and—ah! I can't bear to see you crying; won't you let me try to comfort you? Am I not your friend?"

The girl drew herself up and checked her tears. "I am crying more for gladness than anything else. I have been released from—a promise which—I should have found it very difficult to fulfil, that is all."

"What promise? Your promise to marry Mr. Henderson?" he demanded, boldly.

She coloured vividly. "It is that," she said shyly. "Dick—Mr. Henderson—is going to marry some one else. Dear old Dick! As he says, we were neither of us old enough to know our own minds three years ago, and we mistook the affection of a brother and sister for that of—for another kind," finished up Mary. "Now he has met the right girl, an American, and——"

"And at last I have a right to tell you how much I love you. Mary, tell me, is it only as a friend that you care for me?"

She turned her eyes away with a troubled look, but she did not bid him go. And he, turning her sweet tearful face to his, read all that he wished to know in her happy smile.

LAURA G. ACKROYD.

A VISIT TO WÖRISHOFEN AND ITS APOSTLE.

EXTRACTS FROM A DIARY.

THE little town of Wörishofen is situated in Southern Bavaria, on the site of an extinct glacier—to use a convenient if incorrect word. It is surrounded by melancholy forests, and through it flows a modest stream, the Wettbach, which supplies the material for the marvellous cures wrought here of diseases and wounds of all descriptions under the supervision of the celebrated Sebastian Kneipp, now pastor of the district, and of about 1000 resident inhabitants: a charge enormously augmented by a constant flow of visitors, consisting of patients, medical men and students, scientists and reporters.

The grey-haired prelate is held in high esteem and reverence, and no doubt his wonderful cures are in as great part due to his spiritual influence as to the healing properties of the medium employed. He gives daily audience and free advice and an oration or discourse to a vast concourse of persons, in a great hall called the Sebastianum, built for that end on the banks of the River Wettbach.

His hearers and worshippers might well be old-time folk, hanging upon the words which fell from Hippokrates or Galenus or Abraham-a-Santa-Clara, so great is their enthusiasm and reverence. As he moves about amongst the sick, making shrewd and often humorous comments, he is followed by a disciple who enters the sufferers' names and maladies and modes of treatment in a voluminous note-book. The carrying out of the cure is from that instant in the hands of the bath attendants, as well as in those of the patient.

On leaving the Sebastianum, the most noticeable feature, to the left, is a large children's hospital, where Kneipp treatment is pursued with undoubtedly wonderful success, especially as regards wounds, which are cured without the use of antiseptics.

Sebastian Kneipp is now seventy-three years of age, a hale and hearty man; his own best advertisement. He is the son of a poor weaver, and himself worked at this trade in his native village, all the time he was between whiles studying with a view to qualifying himself to receive priestly orders. He was thirty-one when he accomplished this desire of his heart, but no doubt his health suffered from the double strain of mental and physical toil carried on simultaneously to excess.

On being appointed confessor to the Dominican Convent at Wörishofen he at once commenced treating his ailments vigorously on the cold-water system, with the aid of the River Wettbach, and the results were so happy that he encouraged others to follow his methods.

The weaver's son is now famous throughout Europe as the Water Doctor. His first book in the course of a few years passed through more than fifty editions. When he journeys to great capitals his renown precedes him, and the very highest in the land often seek his counsel. Amongst the many thousands who yearly visit him at Wörisshofen, hundreds are wealthy and fashionable people.

It is indeed strange to see these denizens of the great world walking about this village barefoot, or in sandals, and standing up to knees or ankles in the running water, their heads also bare and exposed to wind, sun or rain. The climate is however not severe in the cure season, and the soil is not stony, so that the delicately brought-up ladies have a fair opportunity for testing Kneipp's great principle—an absolute return to the rudimentary principles and customs of humanity. It is true that the wicked outside doctors say, "Oh, yes, Kneipp is a wonderful man! He cures those who have nothing amiss with them, and kills off all the rest!" but this, no doubt, is a slightly calumnious remark. At any rate, if any of his patients die at Wörisshofen, their resting-place in death is not there. The little churchyard, which modestly surrounds the three-hundred-year-old church, boasts of no proud strangers' graves. All here are humble and Schwabian.

Not far from the church is the large convent.

Then comes the new town which has come into existence for the visitors. Here are great buildings in plenty, hospitals, inns, gymnasiums; and we see shops advertising Kneipp soaps, Kneipp sandals, Kneipp coffee. The latter dainty is, it must be confessed, to the unaccustomed, a melancholy parody on the ordinary aromatic restorative known to mankind. As the pastor disapproves of the real article, no particle of the true coffee-bean enters into his concoction. It requires faith and the existence of a malady needing cure to render this fictitious beverage cheering.

One of the doctor's most grateful and enthusiastic patients was ready to testify to us of the merits of all and each of the pastor's fads. She travelled, four years back, wearily to Wörisshofen, surrounded by all the appliances of wealth and fashion, but unable, from rheumatism, to move except by the aid of an iron machine: she had vainly tried all other possible modes of cure. Here she quickly began to recover, and she is now perfectly well and able to walk about like other people. The bystander has only to note down what is noteworthy. There is undoubtedly much to interest him in this out-of-the-way nook.

ALICE QUARRY.



MAKING A POINT OF IT.

AN INCIDENT OF THE LATE BOAT-RACE.

BY C. J. KIRKBY FENTON.

"WHAT a glorious institution this boat-race is, Frank," remarked Uncle John Rivers, speading himself out in an arm-chair. "England has every reason to be proud of its old traditions; it's a grand and noble sight to see those fine fellows pulling as though their lives depended upon the result, every muscle brought into play, every back bending at the same time, every oar lashing the water in unison; and yet, Frank, there are men who sneak off on their bicycles, or slouch round a golf-course, rather than witness the great race of the year."

"Yes, Uncle John, I know they do, but this year I have made up my mind not to be one of the absentees; I intend to stand on the bank and try to see something."

"That's right, Frank, even a glimpse will reward you; now mind you *do* go, make a point of it, as I intend to do: it will be a grand sight and you may not have another opportunity."

And still urging Frank "to make a point of it," Uncle John bid his nephew farewell.

"Awfully mean," was Frank's verdict as soon as his uncle had gone. "I'm sure my hints were palpable enough: he might have had the decency to ask me on to his barge; nevertheless, I think I'll stand on the bank," he added reflectively, "for three reasons. It's on a Saturday, the race will be a near one, and Uncle John will be pleased if I go."

At two o'clock Frank left the City with the fixed determination of seeing the race, and thereby pleasing Uncle Rivers.

But during his journey to Putney the tempter met him, in the shape of a Scotchman, who said:

"But, man! you're never going to let a Saturday pass away without having even a sight of the links?"

"I must go, it's a good opportunity; I must make a point of it," replied Frank.

"Eh, the pity of it, the pity of it!" groaned the Scotchman.

"*You're* going to the ground, I suppose?" cried Frank.

"Och! of course I am," was the reply; "a fule I should be to stand in the cold for hours just to watch two wee boats pass by."

"And I bet the ground's in first-rate condition," continued Frank.

"Good! why, it's beautiful: I was there this very morning meeself; the turf's so springy that ye'll dance a reel all round the course, ye

will; the greens are as smooth as a curling-rink, they are. Oh, man, come away from the river, come away, and dinna trouble yeself about the race."

Thus was Frank won over to the golf-course.

He returned home, changed his mind and his clothes; the violets and the blue tie he was wearing were discarded.

He and the Scotchman had the course to themselves; they drove the ball hard, they putted it gently, they eulogised the smooth greens, they congratulated one another upon their play, and they never gave one second's thought to the great race of the year, until they saw on the heavily lettered placards, "Result of the Boat-Race."

"I wonder who won," speculated Frank.

"Never you fash yourself about that," said the Scotchman, "it's of but leetle consequence; now it would be far more sensible if they put up 'Result of the Golf Championship;' there's young McLofter, who will surely win, if ever man did."

Then the two men parted, each remarkably pleased with that afternoon's play.

On reaching his rooms Frank made himself exceedingly comfortable; he lighted his pipe, sank into a soft easy-chair, rested his feet upon the table, smoked through one delicious pipe, and then dozed, dreaming of Elysian Fields where golf-links were ever green, and of dark-blue babbling rivers on which floated light-blue boats rowing smoothly to the sound of melodious bells; but suddenly the melodious bell became the front-door bell, and Frank woke up with a start, he ran to the window.

"Good heavens! it's Uncle John; he's come to hear 'all about the race,' and here am I in golf attire! What's to become of me? Confound it! they're letting him in—I'll make a clean breast of it—no, that would never do, he'd be simply furious. Oh, he's got into the hall—I'll say I'm out—no, Mrs. Spriggs has said I'm in. Horrors! he's coming upstairs—I'll hide—no, he'd find me. I've got it!" and seizing his golf clubs he rushed into the next room.

In five minutes he came out smiling and changed; his check suit was now a serge, he wore the dark-blue tie, a handkerchief with a blue border peeped out of his pocket, and the violets were reinstated in his button-hole.

"How do you do, Frank? Ah, I see you have got the true colours on: splendid race, as we all anticipated."

"Yes, it was indeed splendid," acquiesced Frank; then as a venture: "and such a near thing too."

"Eh?"

"Brilliant victory, I mean."

"Ah yes, wonderful sight," murmured Uncle John, toying with the heavy seal on his watch-chain.

"Now tell me, Frank, what did you see? Tell me all about it; I like to hear different people's experiences; could you see well?"

"No, not very well, I was—some little distance from the river, and you know, Uncle John, there was a great crowd on the banks."

"Yes, of course, of course, everybody was there; a grand sight and—but I'm interrupting you; go on, my boy, I'm exceedingly pleased that you saw the race, exceedingly pleased," and Uncle John leant back in his chair, half closed his eyes and waited for Frank's account.

There was a pause.

Then Frank began: "It was a remarkably cold day, uncle."

"Yes, yes; I agree with you, Frank; but that was a detail."

"The wind was very cold indeed," continued Frank, standing in front of the fire-place and looking down at his boots; "and the boats shot pass like arrows, in fact, so quickly that some people couldn't see them at all, and then there was the usual amount of cheering and yelling, and waving of handkerchiefs and, and——" and Frank came to a dead stop.

Uncle John opened his eyes.

"Which of the boats led when they passed you."

"Will he *never* leave the subject," thought Frank; "I shall get into a hole in a minute."

"I really couldn't say, uncle, there was such a crowd, and a big braw Scotchman came between me and the river at the critical moment."

"Tiresome fellow," sympathised Uncle John.

"Yes, wasn't it provoking. Oh, here comes tea!"

Never did tea-cups clatter so musically: to Frank the interruption was uncommonly welcome. Uncle John Rivers had a weakness for tea, and under its soothing influence he allowed himself to be gradually led away from the boating topic by his deceitful nephew.

"Come and see me at the club this evening, Frank, if you should feel so disposed," said Uncle John quite genially. "Nay, better still, will you walk back with me and stay dinner?"

Frank was thanking his uncle, when the door opened and in walked the Scotchman.

He was dying to tell some news he had just learnt, and as soon as he had been introduced to Uncle John, he burst out with:

"Och, have ye seen the result? it's astonishing, it's pitiful," and he threw up his big red hands.

"Oh yes, some time ago," replied Uncle John, who felt a supreme contempt for one so behindhand; "but really one can hardly call the result *pitiful*, why, it was a glorious race!"

"Eh, but I'm thinking that we're not on the same subject, Mr. Rivers, for it was ower unlucky that McLofter did so poorly in the championship."

"Ah, I understand now," said Uncle John, much disappointed; "you are no doubt speaking of the golf championship; that is a very

different matter, and I have to confess to taking but little interest in the pastime."

"Och, but that's strange; now"—looking towards Frank—"ye could play from morn until it was night, so fond ye are of the game."

All this time Frank had been on the sharpest of tenter-hooks; any moment the secret might be out, and at this juncture he made frantic endeavours to convey to the Scotchman by means of facial contortions that he was to be silent.

"But, man, ye're suffering, ye are," exclaimed the imaginative Scot; "you've overtired yourself, I'm sure." Then turning to Uncle John: "He's played with me this whole afternoon, and made some beautiful drives; sure and his play was no bad, and it's small wonder that he is just a wee bit tired."

Frank could have broken the Scotchman's head with the very greatest pleasure.

Then amid dead silence, Uncle John rose from his chair, clutched spasmodically at the heavy seal, and glared upon his nephew.

"It amounts to this, sir," cried the irate uncle, "that for the space of nearly one hour I have sat here only to be made a fool of by my nephew! yes, I repeat, to be fooled by my nephew!" Uncle John's voice trembled with indignation. "But that, sir, is a trifle, and is not the worst part of your behaviour. You never saw the race, that glorious race; you chose golf—the sluggard's game—you never went near the river!"

The astonished Scotchman thought it was time to go.

"And you said you would make a point of," continued Uncle John. "Upon my soul, I'll never put my faith in young men again! Good-bye, sir; you have most grievously disappointed me."

"Good-bye, Uncle John," said Frank cheerfully, now that the storm was nearly over. "I am really awfully sorry to have disappointed you so, but I think, uncle, that I am the loser, at not seeing the race, and it is *I* who ought to be disappointed—which I certainly am."

"But you said you'd make a point of it and you didn't," insisted Uncle John as he left the room; then turning round: "Are you not coming? I invited you to dinner."

"Ye-es; I will come, uncle—if you will have me."

And the two walked to the club in absolute silence.

Frank was still, mentally, beating the Scotchman over the head with his golf clubs, and the uncle still brooded over his grievous disappointment.

A little later, when both uncle and nephew were quietly reading at the club the "full accounts" of the race, there came into the room a little bustling man; Uncle John and Frank knew him well, but his appearance seemed to displease Mr. Rivers.

"Ah, how do you do? This is unexpected—thought you had left town," he said.

"No, unusually busy, I'm always busy. Well, Frank, glad to see you; have you heard of your uncle's disappointment?"

"Well, yes, I think so," replied Frank with a faint smile.

"He! he! wasn't it amusing," laughed the little man, looking from nephew to uncle. "There he was, fast asleep, in that very chair, when he should have been at the race, and only woke up when the newspaper-boys were screaming out the result under the windows. He! he!"

Uncle John's face was a study. He sprang to his feet, nearly wrenching off the heavy seal.

"Vastly amusing, forsooth! Confound it; the day's bewitched; everything has gone wrong to-day. My nephew is disappointing, and tries to make a fool of me, and now I'm made to appear ridiculous before him!"

But Uncle John's nephew was laughing immoderately.

"Why, uncle, excuse me, but it seems that we're both in the same boat, aren't we?" and again Frank laughed.

Then Uncle John thought it wise to laugh too, and face the situation smilingly.

"I believe my position approaches the comical," he thought; and then quite unconsciously his heart warmed towards Frank, for there was something very taking in Frank's laugh.

"Frank," said Uncle John, "you must forgive your old uncle for his crotchety ways; but he had a very bitter disappointment in not witnessing the boat-race."

"Yes, I'm very sorry, uncle. And, oh, I wanted to tell you that I really should have gone to the race—I wanted to—only it is so difficult to see anything from the banks. Now," with a side glance at his uncle, "if I could have managed to get on to a steamer or on a barge, it would have been quite a different thing."

There was a pause. Uncle John sat down and looked meditatively at his heavy seal; then:

"Frank, my boy, I don't see why you shouldn't come with me next year; make a point of it, will you?"

And they both went downstairs and had the jolliest dinner imaginable, and drank to the health of the next boat-race in the club's best "Dry Monopole."



GERARD DE NERVAL.

OF the many singular characters formed and fostered by his school, Gerard de Nerval, the gentle Gerard, as they called him in the Cénacle, and whose real name was Labrunie, was the most fascinating and the most fantastic.

In marked contrast to the romantic band where every member was a celebrity and for whom no clang of trumpets could be too loud, his chief aim and object was to remain obscure. He hid his talents as much as it was possible to hide anything so obvious, courting the shade as others did the light; so delicate and so constitutionally timid that it was his pleasure to wrap himself up in mystery, and even in his literary work to adopt a variety of pseudonyms, preferably placing his articles in obscure journals where they were least likely to attract attention, although the editors of leading periodicals would willingly have published them. Even his mode of composition was peculiar. He would walk about, then come suddenly to a stand-still, search in his pockets for a pencil and a tattered note-book and set down a word—rarely a whole sentence—in some sort of hieroglyphic only comprehensible to himself. Gautier used to say that, like Jean Jacques Rousseau, he belonged to *la littérature ambulante*.

The whimsical and volatile existence he appeared to lead concealed great intellectual activity, and he was very well-informed, though never known to study or even to open a book except by chance upon a rainy day when there was nothing else to be done. All that was strong and real within him was habitually disguised under a careless manner, and an occasional flightiness which he used as a cloak for reserve and sensitive self-repression. Original as he was, his disposition was so yielding and acquiescent that he appeared very easily led, and he was so beloved for his sweetness that no one ever gave a thought to his stability. It would not have been easy to find a being more amiable and tender-hearted; friendship was a passion with him, and the success of his friends of far more moment than any interests of his own. He would seize upon an idea uttered casually in his hearing—a mere suggestion perhaps—and carry it away with him to return it to its originator, developed, magnified, illuminated—whilst in the meantime his own poem or essay would be thrown aside to be taken up at any time as a thing of no particular value or importance. It was said that he could never settle down to anything unless it was to be of use to some one else, but then, if he could be of service, or if his presence were required in a time of trial, he would be found ready and practical.

Difficult as it was to him to sit still and write a newspaper article

on his own account, he would possess himself of the pen of a weary journalist, and take no note of time till the thing was finished. Engagements and fixed hours he regarded with horror, and his ordinary friendly visits used to be compared to those of a wandering bird that, coming in at an open window, would take two or three turns about the room and fly away again.

Surely no human being was ever so full of contradictions, caprices, fancies; he was not as other men, enveloped as it were in an atmosphere of his own; he seemed luminous, more like a poet's dream than a living man; there was something about him, even in the most ordinary affairs of life, which riveted attention; and after the final tragedy, there were not found wanting a host of people to declare that a look in his eyes and a peculiar smile would put them in mind that the line was very narrow which marked the boundary of mental force and balance.

Another of de Nerval's peculiarities was the rapidity with which he mastered foreign tongues. It seemed a sort of inspiration: and when he asserted that, to his own extreme surprise, he woke up to find himself one morning a proficient in German it was not a jest or a fabrication. He became so curiously imbued with the spirit of Uhland and Bürger that his own original poems were often taken for translations.

He was the first Frenchman to venture on a rendering of "Faust," and when Goëthe read the version he said that he had never been so well understood. It was, perhaps, this inherent Germanism which gave to his own writings a kind of thoughtful mistiness. They were often compared to pieces of old tapestry, somewhat indistinct and shadowy but more pleasing than fresher or gaudier colouring.

He possessed a rare conscience with regard to art, and considered his own productions too imperfect—too far from his ideal to admit of the complacency attributed to most successful authors. He wrote a great deal, but when his papers were examined, after his death, with a view to publication, very little was found that had not already been printed. There was, however, one work—a novel—entitled 'Life and Dreams,' which was considered of exceptional value, although the value was purely scientific. It is a study of insanity by one who was himself insane; written in a perfectly lucid interval, and explaining with extraordinary clearness the extravagant sensations produced in the brain by morbid phenomena. It describes the visions of a mind no longer under its own control, with a careful dissection of its tormenting phantoms; a work of reality rather than imagination, and it is allowed that no description of mental trouble has ever equalled it in power of conception and analysis.

The "gentle Gerard" lived like a bird with perfect *insouciance* from day to day; the realities of life possessed no meaning for him. The money that he had, he squandered. A picture—a curio—a bit of rare carving taking his fancy, he would purchase it, and as he had no

settled abode he would deposit his treasures wherever he happened to be at the time, or in the house of a friend. Probably his knick-knacks would have to be sold as soon as he found himself penniless. At one time, having bought a very finely ornamented bedstead, and being unable to afford the necessary furniture, he slept—not in it—but by the side of it on a hired mattress.

When things had come to this uncomfortable pass, Gerard began to perceive that it was quite unnecessary. His friends were legion, and he was persuaded to join Gautier and Arsène Houssaye, who had taken rooms in an old-fashioned mansion in the Rue du Doyenné, remarkable for a vast apartment which was a source of constant worry to the proprietor, as it interfered with the letting of the house. It had a dismantled and dilapidated air; no one could think of inhabiting a place so utterly forlorn, but Gerard, with his usual fertility of invention suggested that it was the very place for a ball.

The proposal was not received with much enthusiasm, since the finances of the friends were far from flourishing, but Gerard was not to be silenced, especially if he scented a paradox. "Those who are short of the necessities of life," he said, "must hold to its superfluities; otherwise, they would possess nothing at all, which would be too little even for writers of poetry. It must be a *bal costumé*, therefore no one can criticise the architecture; and as to refreshments, they must be replaced by pictures on the walls supplied by friendly artists, and surely such magnificence will gladly be accepted as a substitute for a few cups of weak tea, or a few glasses of questionable rum-and-water."

The logic was not gainsaid and the Pompadour ball took place.

Gerard would often start off unexpectedly, and as it was his way to tread in other people's footsteps, if any excursion were planned before him, he would be found travelling in the same direction, as if he were in leading-strings. An anecdote was told of him that hearing one of the celebrities of the day was about to start upon a foreign tour with all the usual luxuries and facilities of a full purse, he took it into his head to follow on foot by short cuts over hill and dale, with nothing but a knapsack; and this he did, coming home as rapidly as possible, having visited the same places, seen the same sights, conversed with the same people, and when in course of time the great man returned with material for an exhaustive book, he found to his dismay that all he had to say was already said in a few sparkling pages from the pen of his unsuspected fellow-traveller.

He always gave elaborate reasons for his intended expeditions although no explanations were required. On his first visit to Germany he announced that he was going to make discoveries; he had no precise idea what sort of discoveries, but he said that one could surely find out something if one tried; and then he would be satisfied with so little.

He happened to arrive at Vienna in a time of unusual festivity, and

supposing it was the normal condition of the place, he was enchanted to find that the discovery had come so soon. Was there then a European city where the people danced all night and ate and drank all day, and smoked the best tobacco? Where there were no plots and no disturbances—where everything was splendour, wealth, and gaiety? Here was the satisfaction of his wildest hopes!

His enthusiasm reached the ears of Prince Metternich, who invited him to one of his receptions. Entering unannounced, Gerard placed himself where he could hear and see without attracting attention, but in spite of his precautions he was remarked by the great strategist, who inquired the name of the fair young man, so mute but so intelligent, who was evidently a stranger. Being told that he was one of the Romanticists much distinguished in France, Metternich expressed surprise that any Frenchman could be so silent and retiring.

For a long time no one suspected de Nerval of actual insanity; the age was full of eccentricities, and the most startling actions rarely excited more than a smile; moreover, it was thought that a romantic passion accounted for much: it was a love more visionary than real, partaking of the ideality of his whole nature; his idol was a mere apparition—a goddess—a star, never to be approached in a world which was not worthy of her, and those were days *when there were loves*. They were his own words repeated by Théophile Gautier, who said—"One should have heard in what a tone of bygone gallantry, with what old-time delicacy of tenderness he uttered them."

Then suddenly there came the end. It was on a bitter cold evening in January, when snow lay deep upon the streets of Paris, Maxime Du Camp and Gautier were in the office of the "*Revue*," when Gerard came in. He was miserably clad, and Théo said: "It blows bronchitis and rains pleurisies—you had better take a coat." "Not at all," he replied; "cold is a tonic; the Laplanders are never ill. I have just bought a very rare thing; it is the waistbelt of Madame de Maintenon, which she wore on the night she had "*Esther*" played before her at Saint Cyr," and he produced a cord very like a cook's apron-string quite new and exceedingly tough. Maxime and Théo exchanged glances, and Théo said, "I have a spare room for you, come home with me." But he refused and hurried away.

It was by this very string that he was found the next morning by a commissary of police hanging to a cross bar over a gateway in the Rue de la vieille Lanterne.

He had been wandering about the streets all night long, repeating to everybody he met; "I am going eastward to meet the coming day."

C. E. MEETKERKE.

THE MANUSCRIPT OF AXEL HERMELIN.

AS every one knows there exist two Bohemias. The one is a square little country shut away between four ranges of mountains, somewhere in the middle of Europe, and has the ancient city of Prague for its capital. The other has no boundaries at all, nor any fixed area, for it is co-extensive with the civilised world. Its capital may perhaps be said to be the Quartier Latin, of Paris, a town within a town; but even this is uncertain. As for its inhabitants, it is generally agreed that they are a singularly easy-going, good-tempered race of men, seldom very heavily weighted with the world's goods, whose worst fault perhaps is the lack of proper respect for those who are. They are also sometimes accused of being idle, but that is because they are often seen out of work. As a matter of fact few classes of men work harder or for a lower wage.

Axel Hermelin, a young Norwegian, was a denizen of Swedish Bohemia. He lived in Stockholm, in a little street off the Drottning Gatan. It was not a very good street, and the room he occupied was "four stair-flights up," as the Swedes say, that is, on the fourth storey and under the tiles. Literature is a somewhat unremunerative profession anywhere, but in Sweden the reading public is so small and so little given to buying books, that a young author not yet *arrivé* may esteem himself fortunate if he earns enough even to pay the rent of a little attic perched up among the sparrows and the tom-cats.

To be obliged to eat, sleep and live in the same room, it may be noted, is not reckoned a hardship in Stockholm, for it may safely be said that nine bedrooms out of ten—not omitting those of the well-to-do classes—are convertible into sitting-rooms during the day. There is no alcove for the bed, with chintz curtains before it, as is so often the case in France. The bed becomes a beautiful sofa, and the "toilette" a writing-table with vases upon it, decorative even for a boudoir.

There was certainly little enough to put one in mind of a boudoir about the room of Axel Hermelin. He must evidently be one of those people who are careless about their surroundings, either because they are habitually too busy to attend to them or because the "inward eye" of the dreamer has become their normal organ of vision, so that they seldom see them at all. The key-note of the room was books; they were scattered everywhere. Along the walls and bookshelves, on the window still blocking out the light, crawling about the table on their faces among the pipe-stems, a few even on the floor, and one under the leg of the table doing its best to make it stand four-square on the warped boarding. The appointments of the room were

limited to the strictly necessary. The inevitable sofa-bed, the reversible dressing-table, a big writing-desk heaped with papers, an arm-chair with one of its legs somewhat at fault, and a few cane-bottomed chairs—useful pieces of furniture no doubt, but certainly not ornamental.

On a certain morning not so very long ago, the occupier of these unprepossessing premises was sitting on the edge of the sofa with his elbows on his knees and an open letter in his hands. He had read the letter a dozen times, and he was now reading it again, or rather following the lines with his eyes, for his mind was busy with the gist of it. The expression of his face was anxious and perplexed, the communication evidently being of an unpleasant nature. Presently he started to his feet with a gesture expressive of impatience, and drew out his watch.

"It's of no use cudgelling my brains any more about this business," he muttered. "I must wait till the office is open, and go and see Herr Nordenfalk himself."

Herr Nordenfalk was at that time at the head of a large publishing business in Stockholm. To his firm, with which he had had previous dealings, Axel Hermelin had entrusted the MS. of the novel upon which he had been working early and late for twelve months and more. On the third morning after the day when it had been left in his hands, he received the letter above referred to which was causing him so much uneasiness. It ran as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,—I fail to understand why—in your interview with me on the 3rd instant—you did not inform me that you had a collaborator in your novel, 'The Story of a Conversion.' For that is the only way in which I can explain to myself the fact that a manuscript in every respect identical with yours was forwarded to us by a gentleman calling himself Herr Knut Nielsson, nearly a fortnight ago. Awaiting your explanation,

"I remain, Dear Sir,

"Faithfully yours,

"KARL NORDENFALK.

"P.S.—I have addressed a communication in a similar sense with the above to Herr Knut Nielsson."

It was not to be wondered at that Axel Hermelin was discomposed by the arrival of this letter, because he had had no collaborator at all, and had never even shown the MS. of his book to any one until the day on which he took it to the publishers. His first idea was that he had been in some way the victim of a fraud, but the more he thought about the matter the more inconceivable did it appear that any fraud could have been perpetrated. The manuscript had been always locked up at night in the drawer of his writing-desk, and for more than six months past he had taken no holiday, and had conse-

quently slept within a couple of yards of the desk every night during that period. Moreover, he was positive that no day had passed by on which he had not done some work at the manuscript, for his motto had been, "ohne hast und ohne rast," so that it had progressed steadily from start to finish.

The manuscript was of rather more than the average length of an ordinary three-volume novel, that is to say, a fortnight at least would have been required by a single person for its transcription. It therefore seemed absolutely impossible that any one could have retained possession of it for a sufficient length of time to have made a copy.

Axel Hermelin was at the publisher's office as soon as the clerks were there, which was much too soon to see the principal; so he must needs possess his soul in patience for a couple of hours, which was hard upon him under the circumstances. At length he was told that Herr Nordenfalk could spare him five minutes or so, but not more, as there was a great press of business just then.

Herr Nordenfalk was an idle man, who arrived at his office late and went away early. He always pretended that he had more work on his hands than he could properly attend to, for he had found by experience that this was the best pretext for cutting short interviews, and enabled him to get away earlier than he otherwise could have done.

Axel Hermelin knew this, and had made up his mind what to say and ask beforehand, so that he might make the best use of the short time allotted to him.

He began by stating that he was the sole author of "The Story of a Conversion," and that he had not even shown the manuscript to any one.

At this Herr Nordenfalk merely raised his eyebrows and looked incredulous.

He then asked who Herr Nielsson was, and whether anything was known of his antecedents.

Herr Nordenfalk replied that he had made inquiries, and understood that he had been employed on the staff of the "Afton-blad" as reporter.

The two manuscripts were then brought in.

On a cursory examination they were identical in every particular except in the handwriting and in the name and address of the author written on the last page. On turning to a passage, however, which he had altered within the last fortnight, Axel Hermelin found, as he had expected, that Herr Nielsson's version had not been corrected.

He pointed out the discrepancy to Herr Nordenfalk, and added, "If the two manuscripts had been identical at this point, I should not have known what to think. Nothing short of a supernatural explanation would have covered the facts. As it is, there is no doubt in my mind that the manuscript has been abstracted from my desk and copied. I will not detain you any longer at present, but I should

like to be allowed half-an-hour in your readers' room, so that I may further collate the two versions. I should also be much obliged if you could furnish me with the address of Herr Knut Nielsson, as, of course, I must see him without delay."

The usually impatient publisher would not have been sorry on this occasion to prolong the interview. His curiosity had been aroused, and he did not think that Axel Hermelin had really told him all he might have done if he had chosen. The facts of the case as stated by him seemed altogether too improbable.

"Well, Herr Hermelin," he said, "if you have nothing further to tell me, I can really think of no better advice than that you should call on Herr Nielsson at once. His address is in this year's directory, which you will find in the next room. I shall be anxious to hear the result of your inquiries, for in my thirty years' experience of the publishing business I have never encountered anything at all similar to this case."

On a further examination of the mysterious manuscript, Axel Hermelin noticed that it was not all written in the same handwriting. The copy being thus the work of two hands, it might conceivably have been made in a week. Still this did not serve to make matters any clearer. A week was as much out of the question as a fortnight. The copy was complete (except for the corrections) down to the last sentence of the book, which had been written rather less than a month previously.

Now it was quite evident to Axel Hermelin that within that period no one could have done even a day's work upon his manuscript. He had been very busy during the whole of that time with its correction and revision, which had of course necessitated a careful reperusal of the entire work and a frequent reference to the different portions of it. Moreover, he could not remember that on unlocking the drawer of his writing-desk in the morning he had ever noticed the slightest sign of the manuscript having been disturbed. To the best of his recollection he had always found it lying exactly as he had arranged and divided it on having finished and put it away for the day.

It did not take many minutes' reflection to convince Axel Hermelin that with the facts then in his possession the riddle was too hard for him. Without assistance he felt he would be quite unable to arrive at a solution. He was inclined, however, to go back from his first impulse to seek out this Knut Nielsson immediately. It might be more prudent to take counsel of the police before interviewing the man who had defrauded him. That he had been defrauded (though in a most mysterious way) was the one thing in the whole business which seemed to him a certainty.

With Axel Hermelin thought turned quickly into purpose and purpose into action. He was not one of those people who generally have two or three courses open before them and seldom adopt any of them until too late.

The Stockholm press had recently brought prominently into notice the name of Johann Woern as a detective. He was not a member of the regular force, but working independently as a private inquiry agent; he had been concerned in several very smart captures of absconding swindlers. So skilful, indeed, had he proved himself, so deeply versed in the habits and natural history of the predatory classes, that he had earned for himself the name of "The Swedish Vidocq."

It was to this gentleman that Axel Hermelin determined to have recourse before taking any further steps on his own account. He felt that the matter lay too much outside the sphere of his knowledge and experience for him to be able to deal with it satisfactorily himself. It seemed to be peculiarly a case in which the aid of an expert was needed.

Johann Woern lived in the Malmskilnads Gatan, close to the central telephone station, a position he had doubtless selected on account of the facilities it afforded for the obtaining of rapid information. It was indeed an ideal coign of vantage for a detective, for Stockholm is reputed to possess the most perfectly organised telephone system of any town out of America.

Axel Hermelin rang at the door of his flat, and was pleased to find that Herr Woern was at home and would be able to see him. The Swedes are, generally speaking, an honest and law-abiding people, so that even this prince among detectives had occasional intervals of leisure, times at which it really seemed as if there were nothing that required finding out. At such periods he rested on his oars and slept twelve hours out of the twenty-four that he might lay in a stock of energy against the busy days that would come round again, when he must watch late and work double tides.

Herr Woern rose from a comfortable arm-chair when Axel Hermelin was ushered into his room. He was a small man, too spare and dark-haired for a genuine Scandinavian, and must have had Finnish or German blood in his veins. He was too alert-looking for the ideal detective of romance. Not one of those wonderfully observant gentlemen we are told of, with a dreamy expression who never seem to be looking at anything in particular. On the contrary, his eyes were keen, and quick glancing, and were wont to keep prodding and digging about in a manner quite suggestive of the nature of his occupation.

He quickly became immensely interested in Axel Hermelin's case, and made him repeat portions of his story twice over. When he had learned everything down to the details of his visit to the publisher, he asked Axel Hermelin a series of questions, some of which did not appear to him to be very relevant to the matter.

"What friends have you in Stockholm?"

"Very few, indeed hardly any whom I can call real friends. I have a good many acquaintances amongst the journalists and literary men."

"Was it at all generally known that you had been engaged upon a novel during the last year?"

"It must have been very easy to guess that such was the case. I made a considerable success with my last book of short sketches, and it is perfectly well understood that I cannot afford to be idle."

"It is a year since you published anything at all?"

"Yes."

"Is there no internal evidence, such as similarity of style, by which you could prove yourself to be the real author of the work?"

Axel Hermelin reflected for a minute before he replied. Then he said—

"I am afraid not. My last venture was a much longer and more serious undertaking than anything I had previously written. The style is quite different from that of my former book."

"How long a time would it take a couple of persons to make a copy of your manuscript?"

"A week at the very least."

"And you say it is quite inconceivable that any one could have done a week's work on it without your knowledge?"

"Quite."

"Are you a light sleeper?"

"Not very."

"Is it possible, do you think, that any one could have come into your room and replaced the MS. in your bureau whilst you were asleep?"

"Possible perhaps, though I should probably have been awakened by the noise. But the point is, that it was *always* there in the morning when I opened the drawer."

"Are you acquainted with the people who live in the same house with you?"

"There is a man named Agrel, with whom I have sometimes conversed for a short time. He lives on the floor below mine."

"What is his occupation?"

"He gives out that he makes a living as a merchant, but I have never been able to discover what he deals in. He has a high desk and a ledger in his room, but he keeps no clerk. He also gives spiritualistic séances."

"How long has he occupied the rooms he has at present?"

"About six months."

"You know nothing of his antecedents?"

"Nothing."

"Is there a telephone in your house?"

"No; if I wish to telephone to a friend, I have to go to the baker's shop at the corner of the street."

At this point Herr Woern closed the note-book in which he had been taking down some of the questions and replies and announced that he had no further questions to ask for the moment. He would

come and make an examination of Axel Hermelin's rooms in the course of the afternoon.

II.

A FEW words of explanation must here be given as to Axel Hermelin's position in the Swedish literary world. For some years he was attached to the staff of one of the Stockholm evening papers, in the capacity of reviewer and art critic. Whilst occupying this position, he took so serious a view of his duties and responsibilities, and wrote so exactly what he really thought as to the merits and demerits of new books and pictures, that he made many enemies. His idea was that the true function of a reviewer was to weed out the bad books and the bad pictures in order that there might be light and air for the good ones.

The weeded-out authors and artists, however, felt aggrieved. The fact of his being a Norwegian by birth moreover did not contribute to his popularity, for it is a curious circumstance that indistinguishable as the Norwegians are from the Swedes to the eyes of a foreigner, they nevertheless cordially detest one another. And that not only politically, but also individually and socially.

One day, in taking up the evening copy of an "esteemed contemporary," Axel Hermelin found that an author whom he had mishandled in his "New Books" column, had taken up the cudgels in his own defence and on behalf of his oppressed brethren of the pen. It was the old story: critics were people who had failed in literature and the arts, or, at any rate, people who were incapable of succeeding in them. You will have none of our books, then write better ones yourself.

Thereupon a very pretty literary scrimmage ensued, which no doubt increased the circulation of the two newspapers concerned. Axel Hermelin contended with some justice, that it is quite permissible to point out to your shoemaker that a pair of boots are not satisfactory although you may not be prepared to turn out a better article yourself.

On the other hand it was retorted that, although Axel Hermelin might not actually be a shoemaker (to keep to the figure) he had at any rate always been closely connected with the trade.

So Axel Hermelin, who was courageous and combative, determined to write a book, such a book moreover as might give his enemies no cause to rejoice in the fact of his having written it. He set about therefore a collection of satirical sketches, a style of composition for which his experience as a journalist stood him in good stead. "Stockholm with the Roof Off" he entitled it when completed, for he had summoned the Halting-Devil of Spain to do service once more. There was certainly nothing conciliatory about the book neither in the plan of it, nor in the treatment. He even made parade of his obnoxious nationality.

A critic turned author generally has hard measure dealt out to him, and "Stockholm with the Roof Off" came in for its full share of adverse criticism. On the other hand it was not a book to be passed over and ignored. The young author had ideas, the points of view were fresh, the wit was always relevant and incidental, and as for the style, if it never rose to distinction, it at any rate never deviated into dulness. Moreover, the book sold well, which is an excellent criterion of a certain order of merit.

Having once tasted of success as an author, Axel Hermelin was impelled to try a second venture. He had pocketed a sufficient sum to enable him to live for a year without doing hack-work for the newspapers, and he made the best use he was able of the respite from dull routine.

These were the circumstances leading up to the writing of "The Story of a Conversion," with the manuscript of which he had had so strange a mishap. They explain his anxiety to clear up the mystery quickly before the story became public property. He felt sure, that in any dispute between himself and a Swedish writer, the sympathies of the public would not be with himself.

In the afternoon, Herr Woern called at Axel Hermelin's rooms as he had promised, and made a thorough examination of the premises. The lock of the bureau was pronounced to be a common one. A clever thief could have opened it in a few minutes without much difficulty. That, however, did not seem to throw much light on the matter, for it did not at all explain how a copy could have been made in the very short time the thief could have had at his disposal.

When Herr Woern had concluded his inspection, Axel Hermelin inquired whether he had been able to form any theory which would in any degree cover the facts of the case.

The answer was startlingly unexpected.

"Yes," said Herr Woern. "I have a theory which would explain everything. I will not tell you just at present what it is, for it might only result in a disappointment. I can say, however, that I suspect your neighbour, Herr Agrel, of being concerned in the business."

"Why?"

"Because, in the first place, whoever it was who succeeded in obtaining possession of your manuscript must have been well acquainted with your habits, and with the hours you keep. In the second place, I suspect him, because of what you told me of his occupation."

"I told you he was a merchant."

"And also that he gave spiritual séances. I have had some experience of such gentry."

"You think they are all impostors?"

"They are amongst the most successful of modern knights of industry. If you inquire into their antecedents, you will almost always find that they have been mechanical engineers, or inventors,

holders of unremunerative patents, or sometimes, actually conjurers. There are some also, I confess, who are sincere. These generally pass for vastly clever fellows, so long as they succeed in keeping out of the way of the lunacy commissioners. The former is, however, by far the more widely distributed species."

"What steps shall you take with regard to this man?"

"I shall make inquiries as to his 'dossier' (for he is sure to have one), and endeavour to establish a connection between him and Herr Nielsson. If my suspicions are correct they must be accomplices."

"I suppose I had better call on Herr Nielsson, and see what he has to say?"

"I think not. If you do not come, he will not know what is hanging over him, and he will be obliged to come to you."

"The natural thing is, to go to him immediately and call him to account. Would it not look suspicious, my not having done so, if the affair afterwards gets into the law courts?"

"No, because I should give evidence to the effect that you had acted under my advice. You had better even deny yourself to Herr Nielsson if he should have the impudence to call on you. You could gain nothing by the interview. He is sure to have a well-concocted story, which he would tell and stick to."

"Well, I hope you will not keep me in suspense longer than you can avoid. If you find you are on a false scent, you will tell me, will you not?"

"Certainly; at once. I must go now; you may expect to hear from me in a few days."

Four days went by, which seemed four weeks to Axel Hermelin. He tried every device and expedient he could think of to make the time pass in a way that should be tolerably endurable, but without much success. Even under favourable conditions when a busy man turns idler for a while he is pretty certain to be wretched until he gets to work again. Axel Hermelin was miserable. He took long walks, went on steamboat excursions, passed his evenings at the theatres and the cafés; but every hour seemed as three for all his pains.

On the fourth day he could bear the suspense no longer. He returned to the Malmaskilnads Gatan, and climbed up to the little eyrie among the telephone wires.

Herr Woern was not at home. The servant would not say when he would be at home, the hours he kept were so irregular. But the gentleman might certainly step in and wait for a time if he wished to do so.

Axel Hermelin elected to wait. He might as well fret and worry in one place as in another, and he had noticed on his former visit that there were at any rate plenty of books on the shelves.

On examining these more closely, he found that Herr Woern appeared to interest himself in two classes of literature only. The greater number of the books, which were for the most part in the German

language, dealt with the habits and natural history (if I may be allowed the expression) of the criminal classes. Long, dry, minutely detailed records of the cases of celebrated criminals. The second class of books was composed of a few volumes only. They were scientific works, books of chemistry, geology, and optics, or rather such portions of these subjects as had a direct bearing on the business of a detective. Herr Woern apparently owed his exceptional success as much to his information and reasoning powers, as to his faculty of observation.

Axel Hermelin soon became greatly interested in a book dealing with the French system of identification of criminals by measurement, and an hour slipped away with pleasing rapidity. Just as he was getting tired of the subject and becoming restless again, the sound of a latch-key in the door came to his ears, and Herr Woern stepped into the room.

"If you had remained quietly at home instead of losing patience and coming after me," he said, "we should have met nearly an hour ago. I have been spending most of the morning in your house in this man Nielsson's apartment. I've got a story to tell you."

"Before you begin just tell me whether you have been successful."

"Completely. I am sorry to have kept you in suspense. If it had not been for one circumstance which puzzled me, I should have been much more positive in my assurances the other day."

"What was that?"

"I could not understand at the moment there being no telephone in your house. On making further inquiries, however, I found that was no obstacle to my theory. It is now thoroughly established. I have been occupied in collecting collateral and confirmatory evidence for the last few days, but I discovered absolutely nothing conclusive until this morning."

"What is it that you have found?"

"I will show you," replied Herr Woern, taking a memorandum book from the breast pocket of his coat. From between the leaves of this book he took a slip of something which looked like thin semi-transparent parchment.

"Look at it closely," said Herr Woern, "and tell me what you see."

"I see," said Axel Hermelin, "some very small writing, German writing I think it must be, but I cannot read a single word of it."

"And do you know what it is you are handling?"

"No."

"Well, that shows that you have not caught the modern craze for photography, or at any rate that you have not kept abreast of the latest developments of that art. What you have in your hand is some of the translucent sensitive film from a detective camera which corresponds to the glass plates of the old-fashioned apparatus."

"But what is the writing? I cannot distinguish a letter of it."

"You should be familiar enough with it, nevertheless, for it is

nothing else than a page of your manuscript reduced to one quarter the size of the original. The writing is, of course, reversed; hold it to the looking-glass and you will be able to read it."

"Oh, I am beginning to understand."

"It is about time you did."

"The manuscript was abstracted from my bureau and photographed."

"Yes, each sheet photographed by the instantaneous process, with the aid of a detective camera. The whole thing need not have taken more than an hour or two. The apparatus is like a magazine rifle. You have nothing to do but to pull a trigger and a fresh photograph is taken each time you pull. It was done at night, and the manuscript was replaced in the drawer of your bureau either before you returned home to bed or whilst you were asleep."

"But it must have been copied afterwards."

"That need not have occupied more than a week, as there were two hands at work on it. When the copy was completed, it was placed with your publisher."

"And I shall have no more trouble in the matter?"

"Beyond appearing as a witness in the case for the prosecution. The two accomplices are already arrested, or will be in a very short time."

"But tell me, how did you get on the track of this business?"

"The explanation was suggested to me by an analogous case that occurred in Vienna nearly a year ago. Instead of a manuscript, however, in that instance it was the private telegraph code of a Stock Exchange syndicate that was photographed."

"I should be very much interested to hear a few more details as to what you have been doing during the last few days."

"It can be told in a few words. When you left my rooms after telling me your story, I felt nearly certain that photography would be found to afford the true explanation of the matter. No other explanation indeed was possible except that you had not been telling me the truth. The one thing that made me doubtful was that there was no telephone in your house. Where there is no telephone there can be no electric light,* and I did not then know that the electric light could be dispensed with when photographing at night. That, however, was only my ignorance; for, on making inquiries, I found the same results could be obtained with a magnesium flash lamp. In making an examination of Karl Agrel's premises, I found, as I had expected, one of these flash-lamps and a large packet of powdered magnesium."

"But how did you obtain access to his rooms?"

"In that, I was favoured by fortune. When you left me a few

* In Stockholm the telephone company supplies the current for electric lighting purposes.

days ago, I immediately instituted inquiries into his antecedents. I found they were complicated. He was a gentleman of many aliases and many habitations. His record was a bad one, though he appeared generally to have escaped with a fine. From the Malmö police, however, I heard that he had committed a serious indiscretion with respect to a cheque a couple of years ago, and that he was still subject to supervision and domiciliary visits. I obtained a search-warrant from them, and, accompanied by a commissary of the Stockholm police, made a descent upon his room this morning."

"And you found that," said Axel Hermelin, pointing to the photographic negative.

"Yes, and the rest of the manuscript of which that is the sample. It was imprudent of him, but these people always do imprudent things. He had hidden it also, as he thought, safely."

"And Herr Nielsson?"

"He was, of course, an accomplice. If the theft had succeeded, they would have shared the plunder. I did not feel absolutely sure of my case until I obtained proof that the two men were acquainted with each other. It then became a moral certainty, and all that remained was to discover some means of bringing the theft home to them."

"Well, Herr Woern," said Axel Hermelin, "I have to tender you my hearty thanks. I confess I was in despair at the time I turned to you for help. I had put my best work into the book, and I think I should scarcely have had the heart to start again had I found that all my efforts had been wasted. It is a year of my life that you have saved for me."

Axel Hermelin was nearly at an end of his struggles and difficulties, his day of small things. His new book, when it came out, was a great success and ran into many editions. Even his brethren of the pen were fain to confess that he had acquitted himself excellently well. He no longer writes criticisms for the daily press, for he has made the important discovery that he can write books better than he can write about them. He also writes plays, which are acted not only in Stockholm, but also in Christiania and Copenhagen.

TO-MORROWS WAIT.

ACROSS young hearts untimely shadow creeps :
 "Never again."
Something has passed from life, and henceforth joy
 Has note of pain.

So many griefs may fling this early shade :
 A farewell kiss :
The old home breaking : or a broken troth's
 Delusive bliss.

And every sorrow comes with alien face
 To young eyes' gaze :
How shall they dream grief wears a kindlier grace
 In after days ?

As when a new grave blurs the churchyard sod
 Can mourners feel
"The grass will grow in time?" So wounded hearts
 Hope not to heal.

"Never again!" they cry, and would not wish
 'Twere otherwise :
For the strange pain seems joy which used to be,
 Though in disguise.

Yet by-and-by, as grass grows over graves,
 Hearts sound at core
Learn that what cannot be the same again
 Is but far more !

For change and loss and pain but throw apart
 Dark doors of Fate :
The vanished Yesterdays need not return,
 To-morrows wait !

Endless To-morrows, stretching far away
 In sunrise light.
'Tis the Look Forward which can always keep
 All joys in sight !

ISABELLA FVIE MAYO.

